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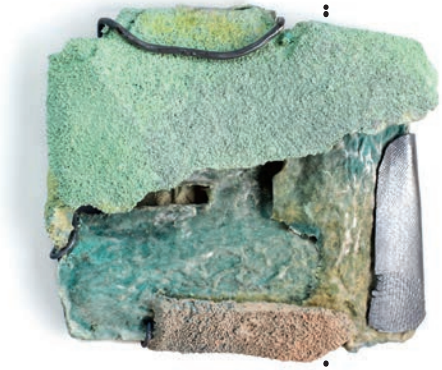
Dual Harmony:
Myung Urso



Material Girls:
Heavy Metal at
the National
Museum for Women
in the Arts

Craft to the
Second Power

ART
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CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF THE ARTISTS IN *HEAVY METAL* AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WOMEN IN THE ARTS, INCLUDING **LOLA BROOKS**, **VENETIA DALE** & **SUSIE GANCH**, **REPRESENTED BY SIENNA PATTI.**

Susie Ganch. Untitled Panel #1, Steel, enameled copper on wood.

MYUNG URSO

Contemporary Art Jewelry

Brooch 'Plateau', Cotton, Asian ink, Thread, Gesso,
Sterling silver, Lacquer, 3.2 x 2.8 x 0.8 inches, 2018.
Photo by Myung Urso

www.myungurso.com | email: myungurso@aol.com

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Artists. Designers. Jewelers. Metalsmiths.
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It seems fitting to write my first *Metalsmith* Editor's Letter in stolen moments during SNAG's 47th Annual Conference in Portland, Oregon. I can hardly imagine a better place to begin my journey with you. I am savoring the flurry of conversation and new ideas that inevitably occurs when hundreds of impassioned artists, collectors, teachers, entrepreneurs, and thinkers – all with metals and jewelry in common – gather to take a deep dive into what they love. Away from the distractions of everyday routine and in community, it is hard to deny the vitality of this field.

I come to the helm of this magazine as a curator, writer, editor, and, in a long-ago lifetime, practitioner. My career has largely been focused on thinking about decorative arts, craft, and design within a broad landscape of artistic practice. During my time at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, I worked to situate contemporary making within the long global history of artistic ingenuity. As a curator at Cranbrook Academy of Art and Art Museum in Michigan, I relished working with students discovering their voices, interested in bringing something new to the table. The artists and themes that *Metalsmith* engages cover a similar range, from discovery to mastery. All are unified by the passionate desire to view the world through the lenses of metals and jewelry. In this issue, you'll find an eclectic selection of topics that speaks to this sense of diversity, with stories that touch on everything from factory craft to Hollywood to the deeply personal narratives and aesthetic voices of individual artists.

It is an honor to be *your* Editor, working to make *Metalsmith* a source of inspiration, new ideas, and lively debate. I am looking forward to being your companion in the studio, the library, the classroom, and wherever else you might dig into these pages. *Metalsmith* will continue to be a vital publication only with your input. I invite your collaboration and opinions.

—Emily Zilber, Editor

The mission of *Metalsmith* is to explore, analyze, promote, and document excellence and innovation in the field of jewelry and metalsmithing. In achieving this goal, SNAG will produce and oversee the direction and content of a publication that will serve as a significant resource for the metalsmithing field. The editorial content of *Metalsmith* will emphasize contemporary activities, makers, and ideas and incorporate supportive content, relevant critical issues, and the exchange of viewpoints.

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Above: Robert Baines, Australian (Melbourne, Australia, 1949 –), *Brooch, Meaner Than Yellow*, 2008, silver, powder coat, electroplate, paint, 2 61/64 x 4 23/32 x 4 23/32 inches (75 x 120 x 120 millimeters). Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Loupe, New Jersey. Photo courtesy of Robert Baines.

Robert Baines

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Image: *Scene of the Crime* (Preview with the Artist), 2018
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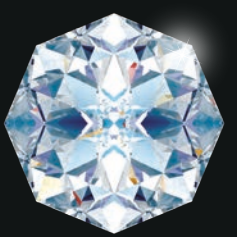

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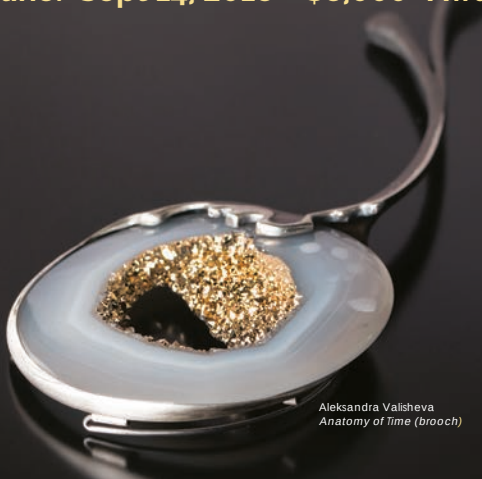
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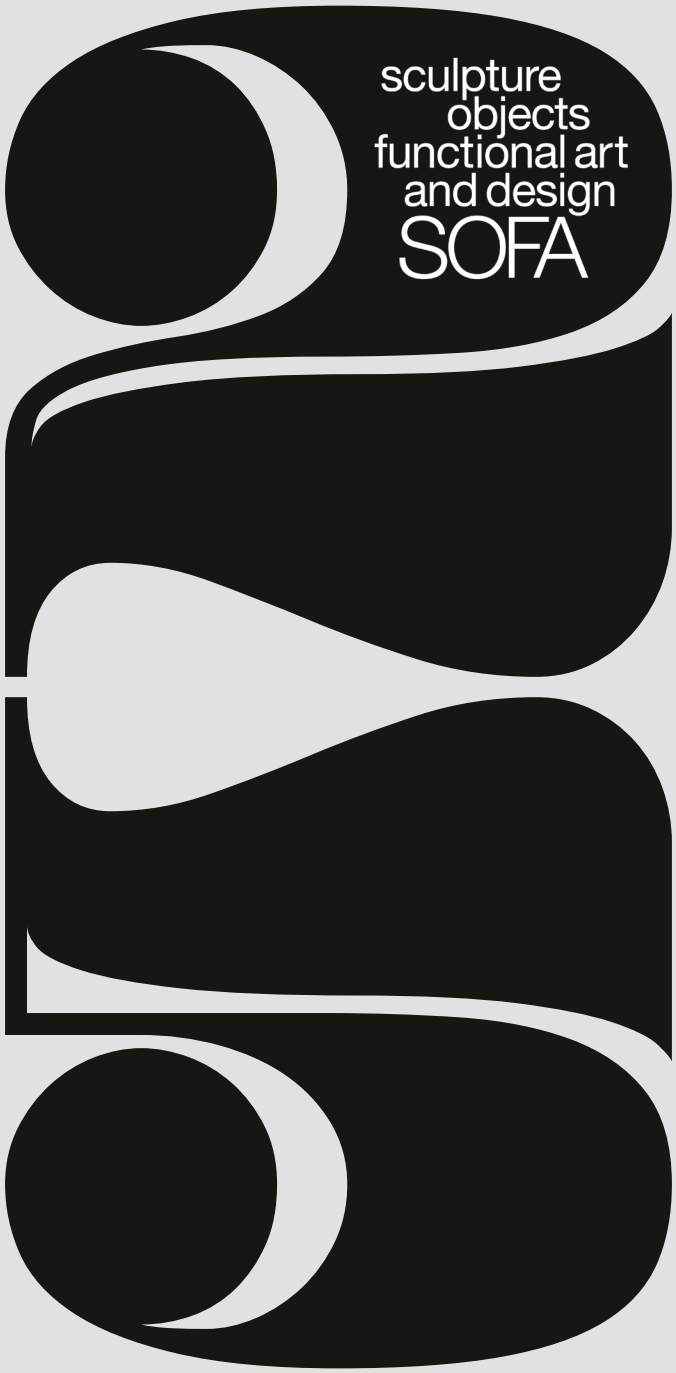

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NEW & NOTEWORTHY

BELLA NEYMAN

ADORNING WAKANDA

Douriean Fletcher could be the most famous jeweler you've never heard of. The self-taught artist started making jewelry eight years ago, and she recently became the first jeweler to join IATSE Local 705, the Motion Picture Costumers Union. Fans of *Black Panther*, this year's blockbuster movie from Marvel Studios, will recognize Fletcher's dramatic Afro-futuristic jewelry, which plays nearly as big of a role in the film as the actors themselves.

Fletcher was asked to work on *Black Panther* by Ruth E. Carter, the film's costume designer, the two met in 2016 when Carter was in New Orleans working on the remake of the *Roots* television series. As the specialty jeweler on *Black Panther*, Fletcher was responsible for all of the metalwork that adorns the female costumes, including armor. She used the jewelry to tell each character's story and to establish their identity. For the all-female special forces known in Wakanda known as the Dora Milaje, the fictional African nation featured in the film, Fletcher had to hand-make eleven sets of jewelry and accessories, most of it in silver. However, for the character Okoye, the general of Dora Milaje (played by actress Danai Gurira), Fletcher made her jewelry out of gold, as gold "seemed like a dominant image of royalty, value and luxury."[1] Actress Angela Bassett, who plays the Queen Mother Ramonda, is likewise adorned with regal, jewel-encrusted pieces.

Not unlike fans of the comic book series, Fletcher is a dreamer. In fact, some of the jewelry that she created for the film came to her in a dream. Visions of ornate dresses with feathers, shells, and crystals and metal headdresses presented themselves, and so as to not lose her inspiration, she woke herself up and sketched everything out. The artist's process is very organic: she often starts making a new work by spreading out precious metal wires and crystals in front of her. She then begins to sculpt, allowing her fingers to create elaborate forms. In some of her larger pieces, Fletcher is often inspired to create a face, even if the features are abstract, as she likes "having a face to look back at me to know that it is finished."[2]

Fletcher with *Black Panther* actress Lupita Nyong'o

Fletcher recently described her time on set to the *Los Angeles Times:* "I worked in the costume section; I had my own workshop. So any time [cast members] would come in, I might've had two torches in my hand or a hammer—with a safety helmet on. And I'm really petite, so it was probably weird to see this little black woman just hammering away." Fletcher has made a point of discussing the process behind her jewelry in interviews since the film's release, in order to emphasize its handmade nature. For example, in an interview with *People* magazine, she referenced the hand-

Works from Fletcher's "Messengers" Collection

carved panthers on the belt buckles of the Dora Milaje ("It took me a long time, but I sawed them all out!") and the laborious process of creating armor ("I had to sketch each one out, saw each one out with a jeweler saw, hammer them, solder them, heat them up, and drill all the holes.").

While working on *Black Panther* has been her "big break," Fletcher established her Douriean line of jewelry prior to her move to Los Angeles for the film. Her appreciation for jewelry as an art form and as a communicator of ideas dates from 2008, when she studied in Durban, South Africa, and recognized that the Zulu women often talked about their traditional jewelry as a key component of their traditions and culture. While the first pieces she made after that trip were from copper wire, she quickly pushed herself to make larger, more sculptural pieces. Several necklaces from Fletcher's eponymous line were worn by the actresses in *Black Panther* to industry and press events.

Since the movie's debut, Fletcher has released the *Black Panther* x Douriean collection, an official line in connection with the movie that is available for sale through her website. Pieces range between $72 and $453, allowing anyone who chooses to wear a little piece of Wakanda.

Fletcher's work as seen in *Black Panther*

1 http://people.com/style/black-panther-jewelry / 2 http://www.latimes.com/fashion/la-et-ig-black-panther-jewelry-designer-20180216-htmlstory.html

Furthermore: https://www.douriean.com

METALS AND JEWELRY IN *NO SPECTATORS: THE ART OF BURNING MAN*

Founded in 1986 by Larry Harvey and Jerry James after they burned an effigy of a man on San Francisco's Baker Beach to celebrate the summer solstice, the annual week-long Burning Man festival has built a reputation as being an artistic free-for-all in the desert of Black Rock City, Nevada. Now the handmade, site-specific installations that characterize the festival have come to Washington, D.C., and are featured in a new exhibition at the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Art Museum. According to Stephanie Stebich, director of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, "[Burning Man] is an amazingly creative laboratory where innovators go to play and to push the boundaries of their craft. Displaying the art of Burning Man at the Renwick Gallery is the latest example of our focus on new directions in craft and making."

Nora Atkinson, the Renwick Gallery's Lloyd Herman Curator of Craft, organized the exhibition with the Burning Man Project, a nonprofit organization. Atkinson, who visited the festival for the first time last August, says that it has become "one of the most influential events in contemporary art and culture." While art made by "Burners" has been featured in select museum exhibitions, including *Playa Made: The Jewelry of Burning Man* in 2017 at the Fuller Craft Museum in Massachusetts (see *Metalsmith 37.3* for our review), this show marks the largest and most comprehensive display of works across media, including large-scale sculptural metalwork in bronze, steel, aluminum, and tin.

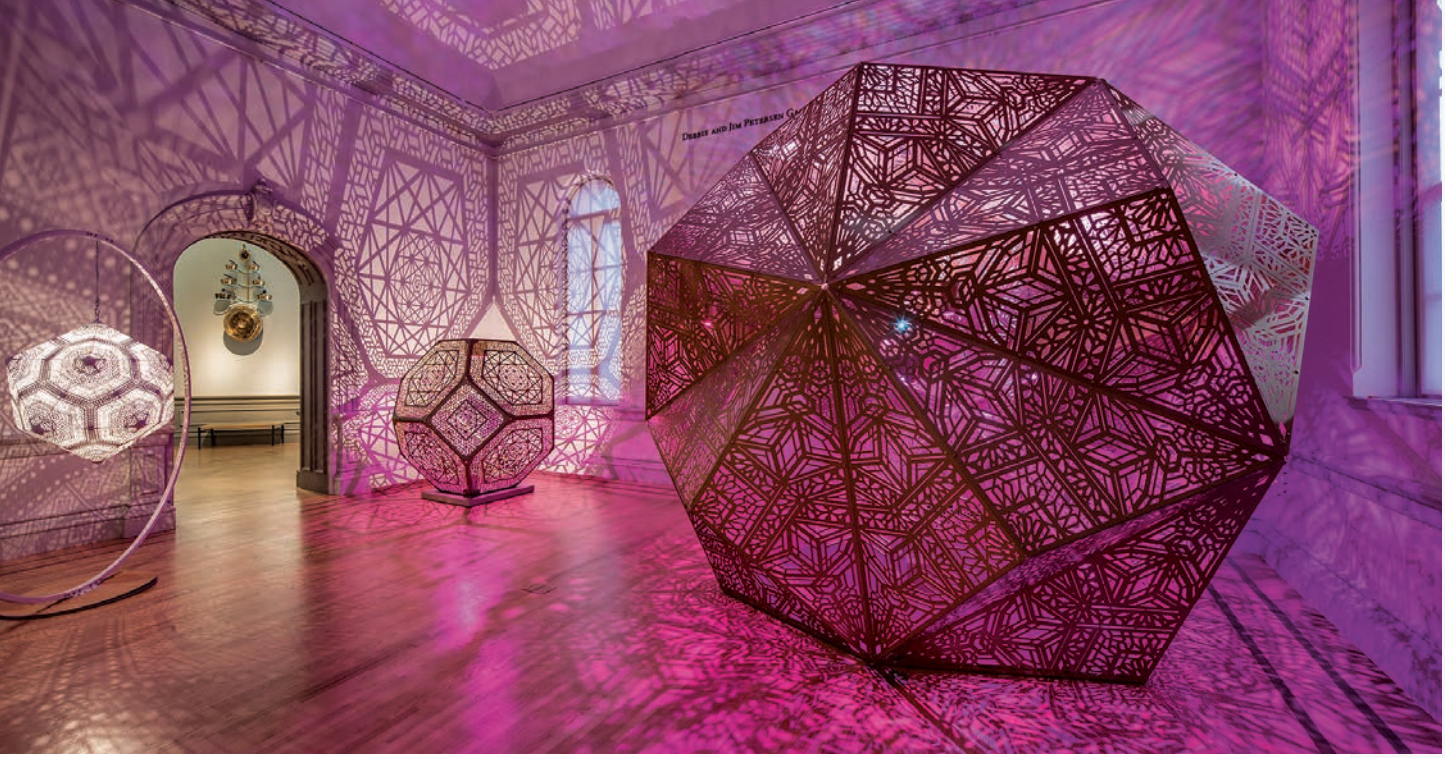
Atkinson writes that Burning Man echoes the ethos of the utopian communities that stemmed from the nineteenth-century Arts and Crafts movement. "These groups chose to focus on hand-making—asserting values predicated on humanism rather than capitalist efficiency; their ideals resonate today in Burning Man's Ten Principles, the guiding philosophies to which Burners adhere: Radical Inclusion, Gifting, Decommodification, Radical Self-reliance, Radical Self-expression, Communal Effort, Civic Responsibility, Leaving No Trace, Participation, and Immediacy."

At Burning Man, everything that is part of the *playa,* as the desert is referred to, comes together as a fertile playground for imaginations to run wild. *No Spectators* includes a range of artworks: paintings, installations, street signs, costumes, and jewelry. Some works fill up entire galleries, like installations of painted steel from the artist duo HYBYCOZO, which envelop viewers in patterned light. Marco Cochrane's *Truth is Beauty*, one of three sculptures of singer and dancer Deja Solis, is intended to raise awareness about violence against women. (While the Renwick's measures eighteen feet, the original sculpture at Burning Man stood fifty-five feet tall.) Others works are human-scaled, like the mutant vehicles that are an "over-the-top extension of Southwestern art car culture" and that transport Burners across the desert. Some "mutants" are made from recycled materials, like Duane Flatmo's pedal-powered *Tin Pan Dragon* (2006).

Burners often wear handmade clothing and jewelry ensembles that are part performative and part utilitarian. Atkinson explains that "pendants are small-scale and portable, so they're easy to bring to the playa in bulk, and also easily carried/worn at all times (everything you need you typically carry with you). Atkinson also attended a jewelry-making class on the playa taught by Sumner Silverman (aka "Pan"), which focused on cloisonné enamel done with resin.

Without the colorful characters, loud music, bold costumes, and sandstorms, it might seem impossible to get a sense of Burning Man, but the installations are so diverse in scope that one can appreciate the artistry and ingenuity. Though Atkinson worked hard to "showcase the environment wherever possible—in photos, video, and in a virtual reality experience," she also faced many challenges in attempting to bring this outdoor event inside. Some pieces were too large or too heavy for the Renwick's 1860 building, and it was also important to her to make the city part of the

A view of the gallery featuring Playa Transport, including Duane Flatmo's *Tin Pan Dragon*



Gallery installation of works by HYBYCOZO (Yelena Filipchuk and Serge Beaulieu) made from steel and LED lighting.

experience. Jack Champion's twelve-foot-tall bird, constructed from forty different pieces of cast bronze, is one of six outdoor sculptures within walking distance of the Renwick. At the end of Burning Man each year, most of the work is destroyed; Atkinson had to commission some work because of this ritual. While ephemerality marks the festival's artwork, so too does durability; people generally build in wood (which is later burned) or metal because of the structural stability these materials provide.

Atkinson speculates that Burning Man's origins in the metalwork-rich Bay Area are also a factor in metal's prominence as a medium, not only as a result of the strong industrial history of areas like Oakland but also because of access to schools and tools. "Community art spaces like the Crucible and Techshop have built a strong maker community and taught metal skills for many years, bringing up whole generations of artists," she says. Expertise in a single area of practice is not a barrier to entry, which draws makers from across a broad spectrum, including those connected to the tech industry.

To learn more about how integral making—and metals—are to the diverse Burning Man community, definitely make a point of visiting this exhibition, which is livening up the galleries and streets of the nation's capitol until January 21, 2019.

Marco Cochrane
Truth is Beauty, 2017
stainless steel rod, stainless steel mesh; waterjet-cut metal for base
18' high
Courtesy of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, photo by Ron Blunt

EARTHLY ELEMENTS

BY ANDREA DINOTO

Wide Mineral Cuff Bracelet, 2017
sterling silver, uvarovite, geode, druzy onyx
2.5 × 2.5 × 2"
Photo:
Aimee Petkus

IN 2008, AIMEE PETKUS bought an '83 diesel Mercedes-Benz "from a guy in New Jersey" for the grand sum of $1,400, and drove it cross country in search of a new life. With a degree in environmental geology from Colorado State University, Petkus had spent the previous six years dealing not with gems and minerals—now her passion and livelihood—but with one of the darkest aspects of this earth science: contaminated soil. Working for companies in New Jersey and Manhattan, she handled soil from testing to disposal; "not really what I imagined for myself when I was studying geology," she says, "but I thought if I could do some good in the world, then maybe it was worth it."

The moment came, though, when Petkus felt burned out, and she began to explore creative outlets—printed textiles, artisanal gardening, handbags—but nothing felt quite right. So she convinced her boyfriend (now husband) that they should both quit their jobs and embark on a rock-hunting road trip, stopping at touristy locales such as Hiddenite, North Carolina, where, she explains, "you buy a bucket of dirt and sluice it, like panning for gold, and you get to keep whatever mineral rocks you find." The experience got Petkus thinking about attempting lapidary work, so she headed to Florissant, in her home state of Colorado, an area known for gem shows—and also where her mom happens to live. "I met a guy there teaching gem cutting in his basement," she says, "offering two classes for $40. I learned how to cut a round and a brilliant, and at that point jewelry started to click."

Petkus was convinced she could make more interesting work than what she'd seen in rock shops. She was also struck by the belief among lapidaries that non-gem-grade stones were not usable, a view she disagrees with. "I love all forms of stones, from gems to huge mineral specimens... and everything in between," she says. A search for further training led her to Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), where in 2010 she enrolled in a three-year jewelry course, graduating summa cum laude in 2013 with a BFA degree. "I got all the skills needed for what was in my head," she says. "Not only bench and technical skills, but courses in drawing and art history." Petkus envisioned an aesthetic in which the stones, whether gem-grade or minerals, are dominant in open, geometric settings that best set off their earthy beauty—and mystery. "When I look at a mineral specimen," she says, "I see the millions of years it took to create a seemingly magical object, and it reminds me for what a tiny, insignificant amount of time I will physically be able to experience it."

Petkus's production work offers three different settings: wire formed around stones (either faceted or natural crystals)

Aimee Petkus in her booth at the Art Star Craft Bazaar Holiday Show, 2017

Photo:
Chris Kendig

Prismatic Collection necklace, earrings, ring and bracelet, 2014
Necklace: sterling silver, quartz mineral specimen
Earrings: bronze, mica
Ring: bronze, green onyx
Bracelet: bronze, amazonite
Dimensions variable
Photo: Adriana Boatwright

with ends laser-welded closed (traditional welding would break the stones); cast prong settings; and free-form settings, fabricated from hammered-out 16-gauge wire. All settings adapt to the shapes of mineral specimens. At SCAD, in addition to art and technical courses, Petkus also received marketing guidance as part of the curriculum: how to set up and pursue jewelry as a business; how to create a portfolio; what a (wholesaler's) line sheet was; the need for collections; and even, importantly, basic information on ordering and marketing through social media. "Instagram was new then," she says, so she opened accounts with Twitter, Facebook, and Behance, which is an online portfolio site with "a social component," she says, "mostly for student work." As a post-grad, Petkus participated for three intensive years in student exhibitions at SCAD, but also in juried SNAG shows and other competitions.

In 2014, Petkus created a pop-up collection for LA Market Week (documented in "Lookbook" on her website), which featured stunning, oversized mineral pieces that "turned out to be too arty" for that fashion-forward venue. But as a result, she realized the practical importance of scale for both wholesale and retail markets. Petkus does all her own lapidary work; often rugged pieces are sliced so that they appear weightier than they actually are. "I still occasionally make big sculptural pieces—I call them "Natural History"—on commission," she says; "usually for older women with events to go to." In 2015, she participated in her first ACC wholesale/retail show in Baltimore, an appropriate transition to the rigorous schedule she now observes in order to make jewelry a full-time job. "I have done forty shows a year and definitely need a couple of retail shows a month to make my paycheck," she says. Retail "means loading up the car twice in a weekend, talking to people—it's a lot of work." When she's away, her husband Greg cares for their three-year-old daughter, aptly named Ruby, photos of whom Petkus sometimes posts on Instagram. "I limit baby photos," she says, "but I do include them because people like to know that you're a real human."

Petkus hopes eventually to have more income from stores, but "wholesale is a long game," she says, "so you have to be doing a bit of everything, diversifying constantly, and seeing what works." For now, sales from her website and from Artful Home, the stylish online purveyor of work by American artists, supplement Petkus's income from shows, as does Instagram. But her account "must be updated frequently, every couple of days," she cautions; and it's crucial to post hashtags for upcoming big shows, coupled with "#handmade jewelry" and whatever else would draw likes and followers to one's particular work. "Instagram is easy to do, while tending to a website is tedious," Petkus says. "You have to think about it." Working from her Philadelphia-based studio, where glittering gems and minerals cover her tables, the jeweler clearly relishes her new life. It's running just fine, as is the '83 Mercedes.

Andrea DiNoto writes on art, craft, and design.

Furthermore: www.aimeepetkusjewelry.com

Geo Gem Stud Earrings
14 karat gold fill and rutilated quartz
8mm × 6mm × 13mm
Photo: Aimee Petkus

HENRI DAVID

BY LUKE T. BAKER

Jeweler Henri David inside his Philadelphia store, Halloween

UNTIL MARCH 2018, jewelry designer Henri David had worked out of the same Philadelphia studio for decades. Sporting a trademark handlebar mustache, and a jeweler's loupe on his keychain, this self-styled "*IMP*-resario" is soft-spoken and prone to a whispered aside, but quick on the draw when it comes to a quippy remark. David, with help from a team of part-time jewelers, has earned a reputation for his handcrafted rings, pins, charms, and earrings, which are miles away from the generic engagement rings in the windows of the city's Jeweler's Row. But after forty years in the same building, David had to move, seeking refuge from the same scourge that's befalling many urban arts districts: rising rent. David has begun the search for a new space within the bounds of the jewelry district, where a community of fellow jewelers and metalsmiths provide highly specialized services to the trade, and a dedicated police presence ensures round-the-clock security—even during late nights in the studio. For now, this busy retail jeweler must rethink the idea of the studio until a new workshop can be found. Thankfully, sketching out designs and carving waxes can take place virtually anywhere, and when it comes to technical work, the artist is able to borrow time, tools, and machines at the studios of friends. For simple tasks like attaching findings, David makes do with a layout bench in his retail shop, called Halloween, in homage to his favorite holiday.

Halloween is cached like some kind of jewelry speakeasy within the basement of an eighteenth-century residential building on Pine Street. There's no sign, and near the doorbell a small handwritten note with a jack-o-lantern doodle enumerates the store's two simple rules: "No Cell Phones. No Frowns." As one descends into this dimmed environment, spot lit jewelry scintillates from the display cases mounted on every surface; they're even wedged into the support columns and archways of the gothic-inspired architecture. Yet more sparkles emit from within standing vitrines in the form of an Egyptian obelisk or a heart. Halloween's inventory numbers some 11,000 pieces of jewelry in every conceivable material and style. Precious stones, pearls, and vintage and antique pieces are displayed on the lower level, and chains, rings, and charms in silver and semi precious materials are grouped by theme on the mezzanine above.

Aside from bespoke wedding bands, antique Victorian mourning jewelry, and sterling silver charms representing just about any occupation, interest, or activity, Halloween's hallmark creations are what David calls his "whimsies." He develops these idiosyncratic pins, charms, brooches, and rings from irregular pearls and semiprecious gems like opal. In a "misshapen" specimen, David might see the nascent form of a bug-eyed dragonfly, a bulbous cumulus cloud, an arm holding a croissant, or the striated colors of a sunset. By adding the surrounding context—the silver teapot from which a pearlescent puff of steam escapes—the jeweler transforms these unwanted stones into the objects they evoke in in his mind's eye. In David's hands, elongated fingers of nacre from malformed freshwater pearls are carved and enameled to become pencils and pens sheathed within a silver pocket protector. Likewise, a surface flaw marring an iridescent piece of opal is covered with a waterfall in cast silver, giving the stone a second incarnation as a shimmery tropical pool.

There's a refreshing irreverence in David's sanctification of pedestrian objects, like an ant farm, a broccoli

Some of Halloween's displays

floret, or even a Mr. Potato Head toy, as he renders them in the same precious materials reserved for traditional jewelry. These are conspicuously quirky pieces that thumb their noses at stuffy formal jewelry; illusory objects that beg (and reward) closer inspection. Each is as original as the deformity that inspired its design. "They ask me to make them," David says of these stones. "I look at something and I say, 'This should be an earring on someone, this should be a necklace, this should be a bracelet.' I have to give it life; I have to. Someone has to; might as well be me."

David procures the materials for his whimsies directly from the sources, making regular visits to dealers in Asia, where he sits on the floor, poring over each pearl or stone, letting his imagination dictate which ones to take home. Back in Philadelphia, he sketches his designs by hand and carves the waxes himself. But he leaves the casting, enameling, setting, and polishing to others, often working with specialists in the same studio building. For David, the jewelry workshop is a collaborative environment where ego shouldn't upstage craftsmanship. "I've got six jewelers, and they each do something better than the other," he says. "I might be really good at this, and she's good at that, and we work together."

David got his start in jewelry at age twelve, when he was involved with a local theatrical production. Sent out for supplies to repair a costume crown, he returned with the rhinestones, and a newfound fascination with the glimmer and glitz of jewelry design. David began hanging around the studio of master Philadelphia jeweler Wesley Emmons every day after school, observing carefully as he sat next to him at the bench. Emmons offered a formal training program that David couldn't afford, but his persistence and talent paid off when Emmons finally agreed to take him on as an apprentice. "I was extremely lucky," David recalls of the hands-on education he received while working on clients' pieces in Emmons's busy studio. "We got to play with things that were hundreds of years old, and we learned stuff you would never learn in school."

David is drawn to jewelry for the way it helps the wearer present a different persona to the world. It seems natural, then, that he works with many celebrities that seem larger than life. David is the personal jeweler of Stevie Nicks; Mick Fleetwood and Christine McVie are also clients, along with Elton John and members of Duran Duran. David even created custom pieces for the late Dick Clark after an appearance on *American Bandstand*. Halloween has never had to advertise; word of mouth seems to be plenty effective when it comes to bringing in new commissions and collectors. "It's about making people sparkle. You're allowing them to open up in whatever way they want to express themselves," he says. It's this fascination with metamorphosis that drives David to create his whimsies, giving imperfect stones new identities that celebrate their irregularity.

David's preoccupation with metamorphosis extends beyond the world of jewelry, and he is well known for several costume parties that attract revelers from beyond Philadelphia's city limits. He relishes the opportunity to don increasingly elaborate getups as MC and costume judge for the city's Gay Pride and Easter parades. His Halloween Ball began as a space for David and friends to show off the costumes they'd created. Now in its fiftieth year, the annual spectacle attracts upwards of 3,000 attendees dressed to the nines. "Come not as you are, but as you want to be" is the party's motto, which appears on posters and promotional flyers. "Everything can be something else," David tells me. "Nothing has to be what it is, and that's the way I approach all my jewels."

Henri David
Pocket protector pin, 2014
freshwater pearls, silver, enameled silver, 14k gold

Luke T. Baker is a writer, design historian, and curator based in New York who has written for The Museum of Modern Art, Metropolis, *Prada*, Modern, The Magazine Antiques, Art Papers, *and* The Studio Potter.

CATHECTING: BETWEEN THE LIKE AND THE LOVE

BY MATT LAMBERT

Lauren Kalman
But if the Crime is Beautiful… Strangers to the Garden, 2016
inkjet print
9 × 3'

CATHEXIS IS THE PROCESS by which we put mental investment into an object, person, or idea. In Freudian terms, it refers to the memories and associations with an object that cause a bond to occur. The feminist author and cultural critic bell hooks furthered this idea in her book *All About Love: New Visions* (2000), describing cathexis as the place that exists between the "like" and the "love" button on your social media profiles. It is the moment when you begin to invest and care for a person or an object.

In an Instagram world, in which we are bombarded with imagery, these are some of the objects that I return to. They connect to my own language of making, providing a plot line of mental points on my own path. When I place them all together, I see that each work offers a protective moment or space. They all create or talk about that fundamental bodily protector, skin: skin that covers and blurs, skin that reflects who we are and evokes contemplation, and skin that creates open space to heal, or even laugh. These works balance an introverted and extroverted gaze, drawing on projects within and outside of our field. Efforts like The Alternative Limb Project, which proposes prosthetic limbs as unique art pieces, and The Radical Beauty Project, in which fashion and art photographs exclusively feature models with Down Syndrome, offer new ways to look at how we perceive beauty and the body that are in dialog with our work as jewelers and metalsmiths.

All of these works remind me that there is no single right way to make, so I "cathect" with them as continual motivation and inspiration.

Matt Lambert is a Detroit-born nomadic maker and writer focusing on body politics and adornment.

Lauren Fensterstock
Scrying 8, 2017
Blown glass, shells, mixed media
41 × 33 × 12"
Glass elements created at the Museum of Glass, Tacoma
Photo: Courtesy of Claire Oliver Gallery

Viktoria Modesta and The Alternative Limb Project
Crystallised, 2012
Made for the August 2012 Paralympics closing ceremony
Plastic, metal, wood, crystals, silicone
56 × 13 cm
Photo: Omkaar Kotedia

Mette Saabye
Selfie (rings, pendants, brooch), 2015
Laburnum, silver
Dimensions variable
Photo: Dorte Krogh

Daniel Vais/Radical Beauty Project
Sabir, 2016
Mixed media
Models: Tommy Jessop, Otto Baxter
Photo: Katja Mayer
Mask: Damselfrau/Magnhild Kennedy

Jane Ritchie
Fanger (vices series), 2016
teeth, klinker, steel, copper, brass, nickel, silver, gold plate
Photo: Jane Ritchie

Anya Kivarkis
Depth Cue, 2016
acrylic, silver
64 × 18 × 2 1/2"
Courtesy of Sienna Patti Gallery
Photo: Mike Bray

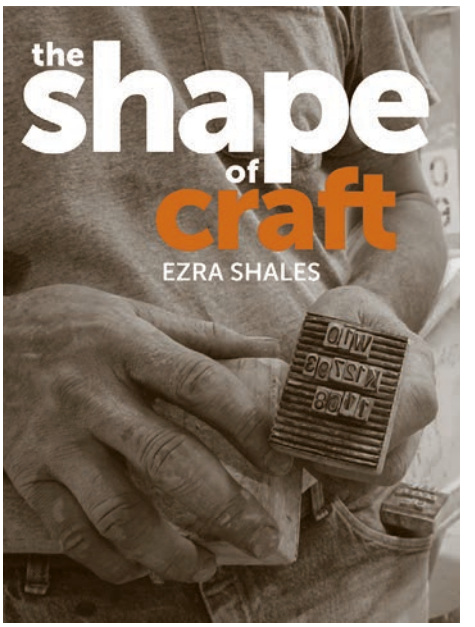
Jan Yager
War on Drugs (City Flotsam/ The American Deal series), 2001
found plastic crack vial caps, sterling silver
7.6 cm
Photo: Jack Ramsdale

Iris Eichenberg
Strange Birds, 2013
(selection from installation)
24 karat gold-plated copper
Photo: Cynthia Greig

Carly Rose Bedford
Ancestral Joy, 2017
Belgium bluestone, glass, fabric
Photo: Courtesy of The Sanberg Institute
Performer: Vita Evangelista

THE SHAPE OF CRAFT

BY ANA M. LOPEZ



The Shape of Craft
By Ezra Shales
London: Reaktion Books LTD
2017

EACH GENERATION FINDS NEW WAYS to propose that "craft" is a word to start an argument with.[1] The term has survived countless debates, hyphenations (art-craft, design-craft, etc.), one autopsy[2], and extensive exploitation in contemporary advertising. *The Shape of Craft* represents another voice in the ongoing discourse on this slippery subject. Author Ezra Shales challenges trite presumptions about craft and argues for greater inclusiveness and appreciation of its outlying constituency. According to Shales, craft involves skill, communion, and empathy with materials. He seeks to dissuade romanticized views of craft as a historic artifact in perpetual danger of obsolescence. When we unbind the term from expectations of self-expression, limited production, inherited cultural identities, and ideals of authenticity, what remains is a much larger scope for this field of practice.

The chapters are arranged with a journalistic sensibility, touching on questions regarding the who, what, where, and when of craft. Shales begins by exploring three archetypal craftspeople through self-consciously constructed images of themselves: Native American potter Nampeyo, sculptor Constantin Brancusi, and studio potter Karen Karnes. From biography, the text then moves to a consideration of anonymous craft by numerous artisans in seemingly standardized manufacturing situations, such as the Steinway & Sons piano factory. In contrast to the canon of heroic individual postwar studio craft personalities, whose wares seem intended only for museums and collectors, what Shales calls "collated craftsmanship," the work of many hands, results in objects born from necessity and the demands of the marketplace.

The book proceeds to an investigation of the "what" in terms of the material nature of craft, challenging notions of inherent gendering, and "artificial" materials like steel versus "natural" materials, such as cane. Of particular interest is the discussion of the contradictory relationship between welding and blacksmithing. From the twentieth century onward, welding constituted a direct, additive process using standardized steel forms. With connotations of industry and modernity, it was embraced by sculptors and academia as a more direct way of working than traditional bronze casting and more suitable for fine art than blacksmithing. Shales suggests that the late-twentieth-century revival of blacksmithing and the large membership of the Artist Blacksmithing Association of North America (ABANA) today was fueled in part by the counterculture movement, and contemporary ambivalence toward artistic posturing. He goes on to question the dictum of "truth to materials," espoused from the Arts and Crafts movement onward, arguing that materials have no singular essence.

Because of their ease of transport, textiles have historically migrated more than most crafts, making them a perfect way to examine the "where" of craft. Weaver Alice Kagawa Parrott's practice and shop in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is compared to the work of maker, writer, curator, and internationally recognizable brand Jack Lenor Larsen. Each artist used weaving to make symbolic journeys and construct their own identities, doing so by incorporating aesthetic references to multiple ethnic communities outside

their own. Drawing on these examples, Shales suggests that we are too quick to condemn appropriation from other cultures, when it may serve as multicultural bridge-building and not the insensitive acquisition of colonialism.

Glass is featured in the chapter that addresses the temporal nature or "when" of crafts, as it is both the material of hourglasses and mobile phone screens. Just as clear windows give the illusion of our being closer to the world outside, the glass on our smartphones gives the illusion of access to the understanding of craft processes through endless how-to videos on sites like YouTube. As the material of screens, fiber optics, and satellite mirrors, glass may be the craft medium most emblematic of the now. Shales discusses Dale Chihuly's large-scale assemblages, constructed in a team within the dedicated workspace required for hot glass.

Ultimately, Shales encourages the reader to cultivate a craft consciousness that expands the honorific across class and status, and which includes the anonymous craftspeople at the core of production. In metalworking, for example, there are a wide variety of skilled workers supporting larger industries, from the small machine shops in Detroit that sustain the auto industry to custom sheet fabricators. *The Shape of Craft* may indicate a tipping point at which some practitioners expend less energy trying to become part of the canon and move towards an interest in using craft materials to address the world's problems by exhibiting the responsiveness and adaptation inherent in craft. In a time of divisiveness, there is certainly a benefit to greater appreciation for the skilled work of all social classes, as well as in increased opportunities for collaboration. This book may be of the most interest to those who seek greater societal impact and connection in their work, and who wish to create objects that solve the challenges of the everyday, rather than those that are encased in a museum.

Ana M. Lopez is a metalsmith, educator, and decorative arts scholar at the University of North Texas in Denton.

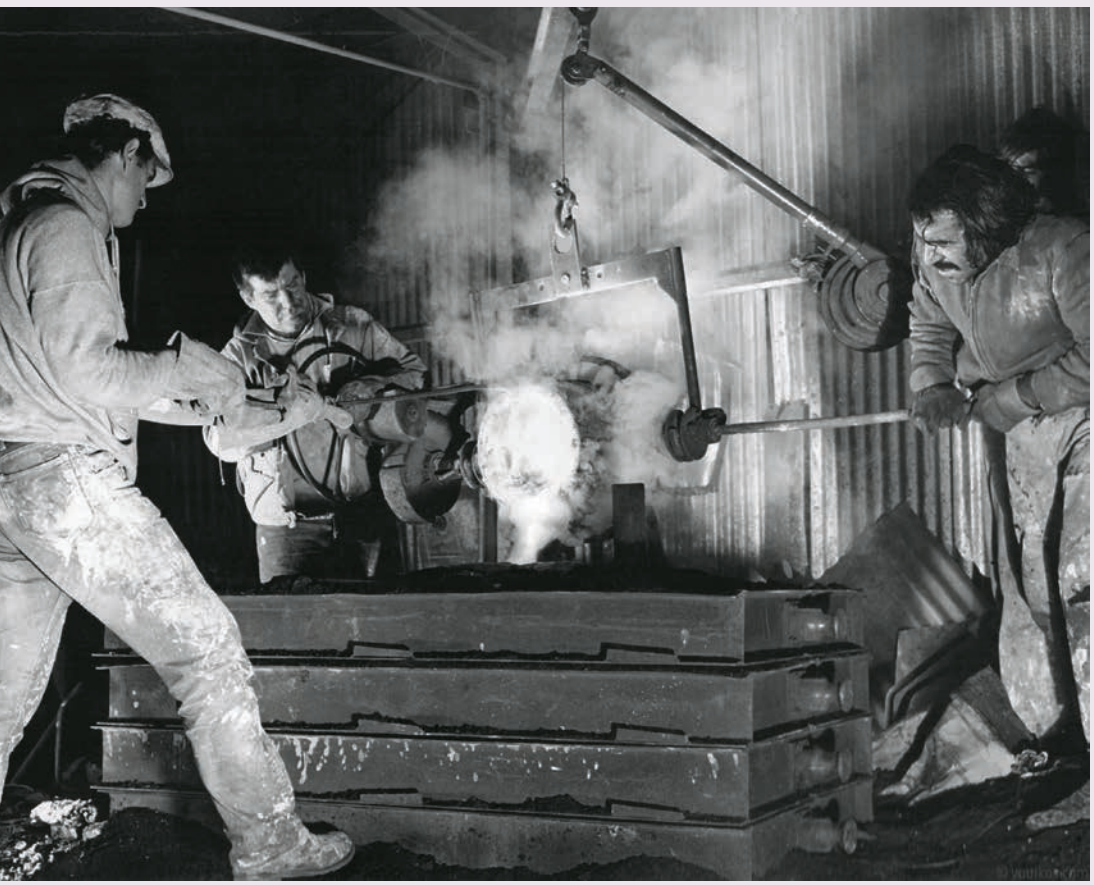
1 This idea is paraphrased from David Pye, *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*, (Cambridge University Press, 1968), p 20, in which he writes that "craftsmanship (...) Is a word to start an argument with." / 2 Garth Clark, "How Envy Killed the Craft Movement," *The Craft Reader,* Glenn Adamson, Ed., (New York, Berg: 2010), pp 445–453.

Factory craft is exemplified by makers like Connie Chapus, shown grinding knives at Cutco

Craft to the

1
Garbanzo Works, circa 1960–61
Left to right: Michael Frimkess, Don Haskins, Peter Voulkos, David Lynn (behind Voulkos)
Photo: Hawken
Courtesy of the Voulkos & Co. Catalogue Project

2, 3
Casting work by Judy McKie at the Artworks Foundry in Berkeley, California, 2016
Photos courtesy of the Museum of Craft and Design, San Francisco
Photos: Henrik Kam



1

2

Second Power

In collaborating with foundries, artists from diverse backgrounds uncover anew the power of casting.
by Glenn Adamson

Peter Voulkos
Sevillanas, 1959 (1999 casting)
bronze, ed. of nine
56 3/4 × 27 × 19"
Photo: Schopplein Studio
Courtesy of the Voulkos & Co. Catalogue Project

Like photography (though with far greater effort), casting destabilizes the relationship between the artist's touch and the work.

Maybe you've seen the picture (see pg. 28). A team of men strain every muscle as they attend the dramatic moment of a molten-hot metal pour. They are illuminated by its glare, which also knocks the photographic exposure senseless. Though this is a photo, it has strong similarities to black-and-white illustrations of early industrial factories, and strong similarities, too, to the rhetoric of those images, the heroic brawn of skilled labor.

The fact that the picture shows, among others, the artist Peter Voulkos, great luminary of the postwar craft movement, only adds to its masculine glamor. It was taken at the so-called Garbanzo Works, a fairly impromptu metal casting facility in Berkeley, California, which Voulkos founded together with Harold Paris and Donald Haskin. Memorably described as "the most cooperative, most confused, most productive, most slapstick do-it-yourself foundry operation on record,"[1] it served as Voulkos's entry into metal casting, a craft that would absorb much of his attention through the 1960s, though he never left his principal medium of ceramics behind. He felt that the two disciplines were mutually informative, each suggesting compositional possibilities that might be further exploited in the other.[2] Back in the 1960s, this was the face of foundry casting in America: hands-on, macho, directly expressive—a vivid contrast to the more precise, smaller-scaled types of casting prevalent in the world of studio jewelry.

Fast forward to 1999. One of Voulkos's most important breakthrough ceramic sculptures, *Sevillanas* (1959), had been damaged a decade earlier in the Loma Prieta earthquake, which caused extensive damage in Northern California. The piece toppled over and smashed, and from an insurance standpoint, was a total loss. But Voulkos wanted to bring the 40-year-old sculpture back from the dead. He turned to his friend Piero Mussi, proprietor of Artworks Foundry, based in Berkeley (see sidebar on page 32). The two men had been working together for some time, mostly creating bronze versions of Voulkos's large "stacks." They reassembled the pieces of *Sevillanas,* took a mold, and recreated it, donating the original ceramic remnants (now conserved) to the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

This story of the artist's hand giving way to the collaborative work of duplication is emblematic of broader shifts in attitudes to casting. In the 1950s, directness was everything. Lost-wax bronzes (typically

Gregory Nangle
Winter Hazel Chair, 2016
cast silicon bronze
19 1/4 × 19 1/4 × 48 1/4"
Courtesy of Wexler Gallery
Photo: KeneK Photography

Gregory Nangle
Collapsing Penobscot Aluminum Shack Sideboard, 2017
aluminum, silver, glass
20 × 61 × 47 1/4"
Courtesy of Wexler Gallery
Photo: KeneK Photography

from a clay, plaster, or wood original) had been a common medium for early modern sculptors, from Rodin to Giacometti, but in the period dominated by Abstract Expressionism, most major sculptors opted for constructive techniques, often borrowed from the building industry. David Smith, Mark di Suvero, Ibram Lassaw, Herbert Ferber: all preferred to use prefabricated elements and weld them together. Even those like Lassaw and Ferber, who did have casting skills, largely abandoned that approach in favor of constructed sculpture, which afforded more (though never total) improvisation.[3] The results were sometimes technically poor, but that didn't matter—it was all about the gesture.

This approach was ripe for rethinking, as well as critique. In the 1970s, professional foundries like Tallix, founded by Dick Polich in Peekskill, New York, began to revive the popularity of casting for sculptors, providing high-quality services to artists like Willem de Kooning and Frank Stella. At the same time, artists began to use casting in more conceptual ways, among them the mordantly funny feminist artist Lynda Benglis. Her sculpture *Modern Art* (1970–1974) consists of two "pours" of metal, lying low on the floor: the Abstract Expressionist gesture fallen flat on its face. It may take a moment to register that the two blobs are also identical, a little in-joke about the seriality of the casting process, slow workmanship masquerading as immediacy. A few years later, the artist Vija Celmins created *To Fix the Image in Memory* (1977–1982), as deadpan as Benglis's work is slapstick. It consists of a bucketful of found river stones, each of which has been cast in bronze and then painted in trompe l'oeil. The copies and originals are displayed together, indistinguishable from one another. The sculpture is like a Zen koan on the subject of mimesis.

What all these examples have in common—Voulkos's reincarnated stack, Benglis's duplicate splats, Celmins's patient pebbles—is that they point to the nature of casting as a serial mode of production. Like photography (though with far greater effort), casting destabilizes the relationship between the artist's touch and the work. For this reason, foundry casting, with its delegation of labor, fits awkwardly into narratives of craft that are strongly associated with uniqueness. I recently spoke to Gregory Nangle, a master of both glass and metal casting (who, incidentally, had a chance to work with Voulkos early in his career). He observes that casting fits right into "the artificial gap between art and craft"; a false distinction in any case, but with particularly damaging results in this particular one. From the sculpture perspective, casting is just a means of executing the work—a "merely" artisanal process. From the studio craft perspective, the indirectness of casting has often led it to be overlooked in relation to other processes.

Nangle's work suggests what we might be missing. He uses casting and

SEEING WITH THE SAME EYE: AN INTERVIEW WITH PIERO MUSSI

The following text is excerpted from an interview with Piero Mussi, conducted by Ariel Zaccheo on August 16, 2017. It appears in full in the exhibition catalogue for *Judy Kensley McKie: Cast of Characters,* on view at the Museum of Craft and Design, San Francisco, from June 2 though October 28, 2018, curated by Zaccheo with Glenn Adamson.

—

Piero Mussi is a master of lost-wax casting. He moved from Italy to the San Francisco Bay Area in 1972 and opened Artworks Foundry in Berkeley in 1976. His labyrinthine foundry now spans 40,000 square feet and continues to grow technically as well, with new methods like 3D printing augmenting the 6,000-year-old process of lost-wax casting.

[PM] What is worthwhile [to do] in this business… is the relationship you have with the artist and the work that comes out of it. That's the reward; the rest is very hard work.

The lost-wax casting process begins with an original provided by the artist, which may be in carved wood or hard foam.

[PM] From the wood, we get the mold. Sometimes the parts are very complicated, so we divide the original in a certain way so we can get a good wax out… After that, we either assemble parts and cast it all together, or we cast it separately and put it back together.

A rubber mold is made of the original, and a plaster shell placed around the mold to keep it stable.

[PM] We make the rubber mold to obtain the wax, so the mold is like a negative of the piece. Then we paint the wax inside and we come out with a positive wax. Then we clean the waxes so they have no imperfections, and then we go through the sprueing and gating.

Sprues and gates are pipes added to the positive. These allow the wax to escape as it melts and allows the bronze to flow evenly through the mold.

[PM] Next we put the investment [hard outer layer] around the wax and the whole thing goes into a kiln, and all the wax comes out leaving a cavity. That's where we pour the bronze.

The wax is dipped repeatedly into a liquid silica slurry. After fifteen layers are applied, the investment is tough enough to support molten bronze, but delicate enough to be removed after the bronze inside hardens.

[PM] After that, we break off all the investment and use a sandblaster to cut the sprues and cut the assembly. The assembly is very difficult because it's a smooth surface. A smooth surface doesn't forgive anything.

After the sprue and gate assembly is removed from the bronze, the piece is reassembled and welded. Technicians must refinish the joins to match the rest of the surface.

[PM] We aim to think the same way the artist thinks. If we don't see it with the same eye, we'll never get it right… So we have to get into that state of mind.

The final step is the application of a patina—not an exact science. Several layers are brushed on, creating chemical reactions that produce richness and depth of color.

[PM] When you put the wet patina on, you have to warm up the metal first, and then create this binding. More than mixing, we layer. You can't get a color made and say, 'this is the color'; you have to put one layer on first, then apply another layer over.

Though the lost-wax casting process involves a small army of well-trained professionals, Mussi insists that the success of a bronze begins and ends with the artist's original.

[PM] The form is the most important thing. The casting itself is not that big of a deal. It's just form; when you put it together, everything flows. Your eye has to tell you that it's correct.

Patina samples at the Artworks Foundry
Photo: Henrik Kam
Courtesy of the Museum of Craft and Design, San Francisco

Thomas Hucker
Coffee Table, 2008
bubinga and cast bronze
18 × 78 × 18"
Courtesy of the artist

constructive techniques in tandem, in pursuit of an overall vision that aims to balance organic and geometric forms. For his "Winter Hazel" series, he builds rectilinear furniture out of individual cast leaves; the original leaves were gathered on a single walk. The pieces are extraordinarily labor-intensive, with up to 9,000 welds in a single object, and very fragile in the construction phase. Once all the leaves are set into the structure, however, the object's delicacy is subsumed into a unified, monolithic form. Similarly, Nangle's "Shack" series, inspired by derelict fishermen's cabins in Maine, is built quickly and intuitively, working with individual components cast from salvaged timber. The works seem caught in mid-collapse, or perhaps, mid-assembly. In both of these series, metal casting's duplicative nature flips around to become an asset. Both the leaves and the cabins seem ephemeral, but he has fixed them for all time. "In science, you have to fix something to measure it," Nangle observes. "It's the same thing in art, except we use representation."

In addition to his own work, Nangle has always executed casting for others, not only for artists but also for furniture design companies like BDDW. Again, he views this work in terms that others might find counterintuitive; for him, commissioned fabrication work is a means of deepening his own art. (He remembers the artist Steve Tobin saying to him, "You'll never make great work until you make other people's work first.") One of the other craft artists he's collaborated with is Thomas Hucker, who is principally known as a furniture maker in wood. Since 1980, though, Hucker has been incorporating bronze elements into his pieces, taking on the challenge of pairing the metal and timber. This construction requires precision fitting, so he tends to work with a foundry that is close to his New Jersey home—most recently, with a fellow artist called Charles Jones—and also brings to the fore the issue of surface treatment.

Other contemporary furniture makers who have their work cast in bronze do place great emphasis on patina. Judy Kensley McKie is a superlative example. In her own collaboration with Piero Mussi and Artworks Foundry, which is the subject of an exhibition I recently co-curated for the Museum of Craft and Design in San Francisco, much of the conversation and attention has centered around the question of surface. Surface may in fact be the most technically demanding aspect of the caster's art: patination chemicals and then wax must be layered and worked

Gregory Nangle
Ripple Rorschach Chair, 2018
low polish cast bronze
24 × 20 × 38"
Photo: KeneK Photography
Courtesy of Wexler Gallery

Ceramic is a heavy and obdurate material, but bronze makes it seem positively ethereal by comparison.

Judy McKie
Dog Bites Tail, 2010
cast bronze
Photo: Scott McCue

into the porous surface of the bronze, achieving both color and luster. Hucker feels that highly skilled makers like Jones tend to have an identifiable "touch" in the way they patinate the surface. In his work, the combination of wood and bronze highlights nuanced color choices, two material palettes working together to establish the aesthetic of the object.

Nicole Cherubini, a well-known ceramic sculptor whose work is informed to some extent by that of Voulkos, also works in dual mediums. Recently she has been experimenting with pairings of clay and bronze. Her surfaces are intensely worked with the fingers, like gigantic pinch pots, and she finds it fascinating to see these innumerable marks replicated in cast form, in a material she has not been able to touch at all. She says that her primary interest in metal casting has been to introduce a sense of weight to her work: ceramic is a heavy and obdurate material, but bronze makes it seem positively ethereal by comparison. Cherubini likes to exaggerate this contrast by eschewing colorful glazes, instead leaving the clay in a chalky, bisque-fired state. She has also considered other possibilities: adding metallic lusters to the ceramic, and white patina to the bronze, so that they appear to switch places, for example.

To Cherubini's way of thinking, it is now time to deconstruct status hierarchies of materiality, in which bronze casting was recognized as an "official" sculpture material, and ceramic often relegated to the dining room sideboard. Ironically, it is through the embrace of bronze casting's deep roots in craft that it has re-emerged in recent years as a newly exciting sculptural material. As the domain of the fabricator and the copyist, bronze was often shunted out of the spotlight in the twentieth century. Today, thanks to the collapse of once-rigid boundaries between art and craft, it has a new chance to shine.

Glenn Adamson is Senior Scholar at the Yale Center for British Art. His new book is Fewer Better Things: The Hidden Wisdom of Objects *(New York: Bloomsbury, 2018).*

Nicole Cherubini
Earth Pot 9,
"3 Fates" series, 2015
earthenware, glaze,
bronze, medium-density
fiberboard (MDF)
58 × 25 × 27"

1 Joseph Pugliese, "Casting in the Bay Area," *Artforum* (Aug. 1963), p. 11–14: 11. Jim Melchert remembers the first foundry in less positive terms, saying that it was "the most makeshift situation," and lacked sufficient space and ventilation. Author's interview with Jim Melchert, 21 January 2016. **2** See Glenn Adamson, "Back to Black," in Adamson, Andrew Perchuk, and Barbara Paris Gifford, *Voulkos: The Breakthrough Years* (New York: Museum of Arts and Design/Black Dog, 2016). **3** Ferber discussed this issue in an oral history conducted by art historian Irving Sandler, April 22, 1968–January 6, 1969. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Paula Castillo
Tethered, 2014
lock washers and hand-cut and twisted wire, 15 × 18 × 11"
Photo: Courtesy of the artist

MATERIAL GIRLS: *HEAVY METAL* AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM FOR WOMEN IN THE ARTS

by Vanessa Mallory Kotz

Alice Hope
Untitled, 2016
used Budweiser tabs
6' diameter
Photo: Jenny Gorman

A big question—What's gender got to do with it?—is at the core of a new exhibition, *Heavy Metal: Women to Watch 2018,* at the National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) in Washington, D.C. From monumental sculpture to conceptual pieces, to jewelry in silver, copper, bronze, pewter, iron, gold, and aluminum, the show brings together more than fifty works of art made in the last decade by a group of twenty international female artists. They hail not only from within the metals and jewelry world, but across the broader landscape of contemporary art practice. According to NMWA Associate Curator Virginia Treanor, these disparate artists are linked not just through their gender, but also through their desire to show "the paradox of humankind's mastery over the material and our total dependence on it, the reflection of our present, and a glint of our future." Furthermore, "The durability of metal attracts artists who seek to encapsulate memory, either collective or personal." NMWA, which was founded in 1981, is the only major museum in the world solely dedicated to championing women through the arts. Through its exhibitions and collections, it looks to shed light on the historically marginalized perspectives and experiences of female makers.

Heavy Metal is the fifth iteration in "Women to Watch," the museum's series of exhibitions dedicated to emerging and underrepresented female artists, begun in 2008. The exhibitions have focused both on specific media like painting and fiber, and larger themes. Each is comprised of works submitted by seventeen national and three international committees, composed of advisors with a broad range of experience in the arts. Treanor then takes on the challenge of collecting the recommendations from each committee (each of which works with a local curator who provides guidance in identifying artists), sorting through hundreds of images, and developing a cohesive show. "This is not a competition," Treanor said in an interview. "It's not about picking the 'best artists' from each committee, but really trying to make a balanced exhibition out of the submissions that we get."

"When we put the call out this time for metal, I purposefully did not get into specifics about what I was looking for," Treanor says. She provided a list of images and names to the curators that included a broad range of twentieth- and twenty-first century artists working in metals, including those with a specialization in the media like Vivian Beer, Chunghi Choo, and Betty Cooke. Also included were those who are primarily identified with other areas of the art world, like the sculptors Isa Genzken and Eva Hesse, the fiber artists Ruth Asawa and Mary Giles, and the architect Maya Lin, to encourage a variety of submissions.

This year's theme was inspired in part by the NMWA's collection of historic metalwork, which includes more than 190 works made by women working primarily in England and Ireland between 1695 and 1852. Featured artists include Hester Bateman (1708–1794), an English silversmith who, like many widows of metalworkers, successfully ran and expanded the family silver business following the death of her husband, an "outworker" who made chains for master silversmiths in London. Elizabeth Godfrey (active circa 1720–1758), a London-born smith, worked in the Huguenot tradition, supplying her noble clientele with high-quality pieces in an ornate Rococo style influenced by designs popular in the French court. The works in *Heavy Metal*

Hester Bateman
George III Cake Basket, 1788
silver
16 1/4" long
1987.82; National Museum of Women in the Arts; Silver collection assembled by Nancy Valentine, purchased with funds donated by Mr. and Mrs. Oliver R. Grace and family
Photo: Lee Stalsworth

Elizabeth Godfrey
George II Tea Caddy, 1755
silver
5 1/2 × 4 1/4 × 2 7/8"
1987.67.1a-b; National Museum of Women in the Arts; Silver collection assembled by Nancy Valentine, purchased with funds donated by Mr. and Mrs. Oliver R. Grace and family
Photo: Lee Stalsworth

Opposite:
Katherine Vetne
Selling the Dream, 2017
three lead crystal Avon pitchers, melted and mirrored with silver nitrate
45 × 11 × 10 3/4"
Photo: John Janca

"demonstrate that contemporary women artists not only continue a rich legacy in metalwork, but also transcend its traditions, blending hand- and machine-work with affecting references to science, nature, history, and human relationships," Treanor explains. "One of the main takeaways that we hope to convey is the fact that women have been present in metalworking fabrication and process for a very long time. And yet, I think it's still very much seen as a male-dominated field within contemporary art."

Danielle Grall and Alexandra Lambert, co-chairs of the Paris committee, wrote: "More women are working in metal and attempting large-scale abstract and conceptual pieces that have no relation to traditional sculptures ... More recent trends in metal sculptures show a continued interest by artists in creating original conceptual works which tell a story ... [they] also explore the possibilities of their materials and the various scientific characteristics and transformations."

Treanor says "One of the most fulfilling and exciting things for me in doing these exhibitions is seeing what themes emerge from these groupings that you're putting together." As she looked through the committees' submissions, she discovered these artists were not only working the material by welding and smelting, but also using prefabricated and found objects to create new forms.

Katherine Vetne (Northern California, b. 1987), for example, transforms household goods into unrecognizable objects, offering sharp cultural criticisms along the way. In *Selling the Dream* (2017) Vetne melted down three lead crystal pitchers sold by Avon during the financial boom of the 1980s. "Metal is embedded with notions of cultural value, desire, and social hierarchy," Vetne says. "I use silver nitrate as a coating on melted lead crystal, essentially turning the surface of the work into a mirror. The crystal, loaded with associations of gender norms and suburbia, becomes a surreal, slightly sinister object, distorting images of the viewer and the surrounding world on the polished surface." Vetne's choice of Avon is intentional. "Avon is a multi-level marketing company, also known as a pyramid scheme," Vetne says. "The pyramid scheme is not only a major backbone of capitalism; it is a perfect metaphor for so many other societal structures in which success is widely advertised as attainable to all, but only available to a select few at the expense of everyone else."

Alice Hope (greater New York region, b. 1966) also works with mass-produced materials meant for household use. Instead of "lowering" the value of a luxury good by melting it down, she elevates the mundane. Hope's untitled work of 2016, made from red Budweiser can tabs, transforms discarded junk into a closely wound six-foot-diameter coil mounted to the wall and spilling onto the floor. Stacked and threaded tightly together into a single, gleaming chain, the humble aluminum

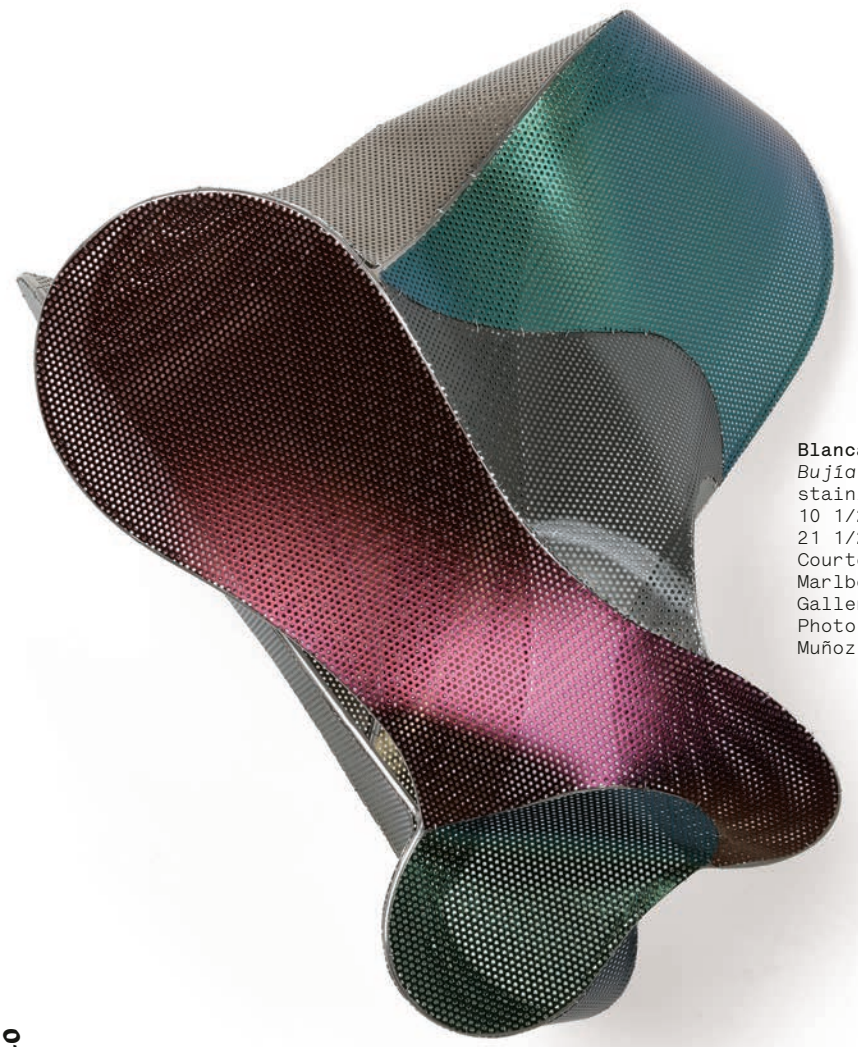
tabs together become a rich, reflective surface, both mechanical and almost biological in appearance, as the end of the tidy chain descends from the center of the spiral into an intestinal, messy heap on the gallery floor.

"And then there is someone like Paula Castillo," Treanor says. "She's using found, discarded, industrial byproducts, and then very intentionally using 3-D software on the computer to create her forms, and then doing the physical welding after that process is done. So, it's a great symbiosis of using found objects, but manipulating them too." *Tethered* (2014) is an abstract sculpture made from lock washers and hand-cut and twisted wire, precisely arranged into the form that flowed from the artist's mind's eye to the computer blueprint. Castillo (New Mexico, b. 1961) notes that she is "...attracted to metal because metal's malleability makes it a motor of history—both geological and human. Metal transforms and translates the meaning of a range of tangible and abstract elements, rendering all visible to the reader."

Blanca Muñoz (Madrid, b. 1963) creates abstract sculptures from stainless steel. "Muñoz is one of the most recognized Spanish artists," notes Spain committee curator Lucia Ybarra. "The three metal pieces selected for the *Women to Watch* 2018 exhibition are sculptural constructions that play with light and space." The artist is inspired by constellations, and the mathematical-physical principles of space and the botanical universe. "My fascination for the mystery of the universe took me to sketch in a space searching for the darkness," she says. Muñoz solders graceful curves of perforated stainless steel to a fixed steel rod, layering the natural grey with pieces clad in vibrant colors. Many of her works are large-scale outdoor sculptures. For *Bujía (Spark Plug,* 2013), however, Muñoz worked in a smaller scale. She's transformed a rigid, solid material into an ethereal UFO mounted to the wall, a floating organism or deep space phenomenon in grey, magenta, and teal. The die-cut holes in each layer create shadow, movement, and mystery.

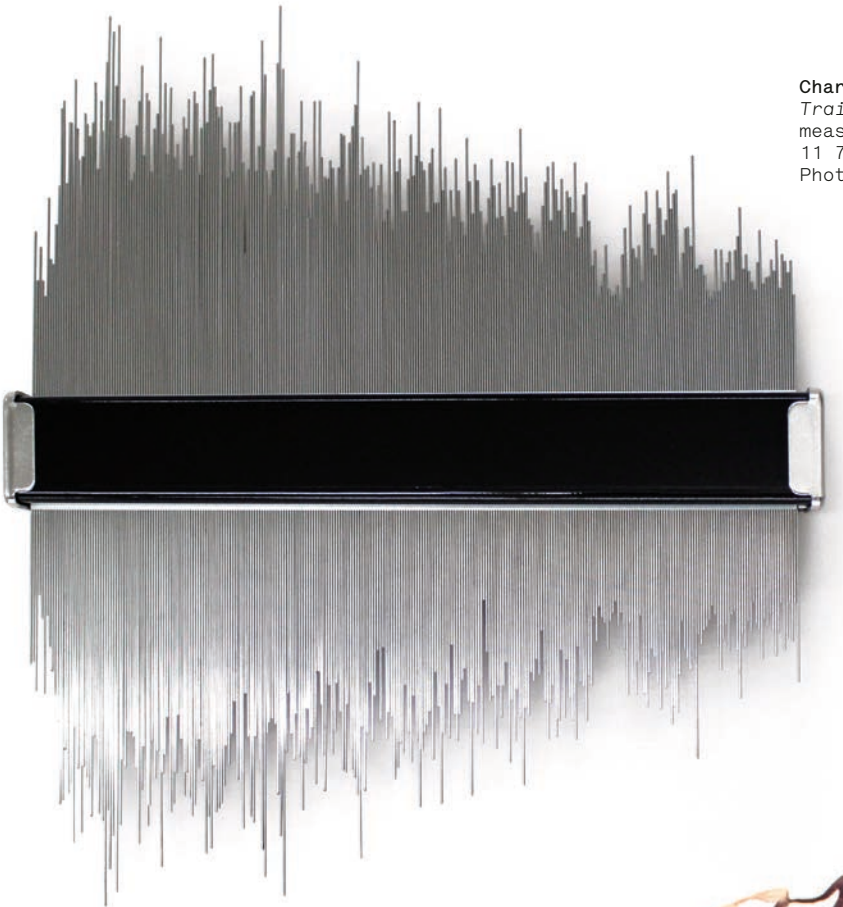
Like Muñoz, Charlotte Charbonnel (France, b. 1980) uses the hardness of metal, in this case iron filings, to capture the unexplained and ephemeral in *Train End* (2016). "Metal reminds me of energy and conductibility. I try to reveal the poetical potential of metal transformations," Charbonnel says. "I really got interested by the metal in its iron filings state because it is volatile, and once in contact with magnets, it becomes solid. It is this transformation that interests me because the obtained shape questions the status, the reign."

While researching white noise and recent scientific discoveries online, Charbonnel came across an article about a recording of a mysterious and untraceable sound discovered in 1997 by a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) hydrophone in the Pacific Ocean. In the recording, a low humming/mechanical/animal sound increases to an almost steady frequency that scientists have yet to identify. "It's like the sound of a train that gets closer,"



Blanca Muñoz
Bujía, 2013
stainless steel
10 1/2 × 23 1/2 × 21 1/2"
Courtesy of Marlborough Gallery Madrid
Photo: Arturo Muñoz

METAL REMINDS ME OF ENERGY AND CONDUCTIBILITY. I TRY TO REVEAL THE POETICAL POTENTIAL OF METAL TRANSFORMATIONS.



Charlotte Charbonnel
Train End, 2016
measuring tool and stainless steel rods
11 7/8 × 13 3/8"
Photo: Charlotte Charbonnel

Cheryl Eve Acosta
Fossilium, 2015
collar with copper and organza
4 × 11 × 13"
Photo: Gene Starr

Lola Brooks
four&twenty, 2015
stainless steel, 14-karat gold solder, and champagne rose-cut diamonds
4 1/2 × 5 × 2 1/4"
Collection of Allen and Irene Natow
Photo: Sienna Patti

Charbonnel says. "My work, *Train End*, is related to the five last seconds of this sound and represents it graphically. What interested me is the capacity of these sounds to generate stories and fictions, because as their origins remain unknown, they could be extraterrestrial, extraordinary, or paranormal. I wished to strengthen this mystery." The resulting sculpture, made from a measuring tool and stainless-steel rods, transcribes the sound visually, like an EKG measuring the beat of a human heart.

Cheryl Eve Acosta (Kansas City, b. 1980) is a sculptor and jeweler who also takes her cues from nature, recreating the delicate temporary evidence of life in copper, memorializing the outstretched finger of coral, the spine of a small animal, or the shadow of a leaf. "A small percentage of all life forms are rarely preserved as fossils, and even fewer are discovered," Acosta says. *Fossilium* (2015), a piece made to be worn as a collar, "captures a snapshot of our existence with its exoskeleton like silhouette." The elegant copper structure, accented with soft organza, rises from the shoulders of its wearer like an Elizabethan ruff for an underwater queen. "The duality between a fragile, manmade material fused with nature's raw copper elevates my curiosity," Acosta says. "My training as a metalsmith makes me appreciate seeing two unlike materials co-exist into a new form."

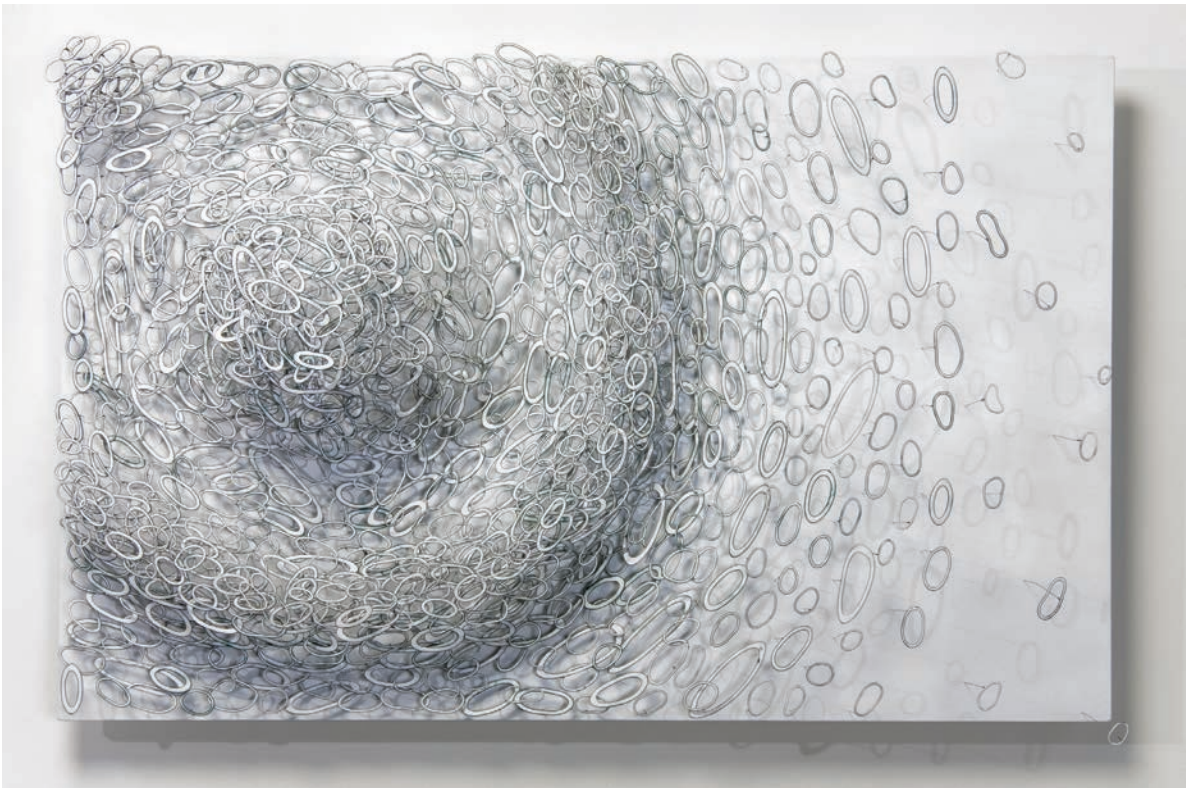
Petronella Eriksson (Sweden, b. 1969) is also interested in evoking the mysterious, but at a more whimsical level. *Sake jug with cups* (2017) is crafted from gleaming silver. Vines and branches spring from the familiar forms of household goods, connecting and lifting them for a tea party only the Mad Hatter could host. "Plants and the way they grow have always been a big inspiration to me," Eriksson says. "The containers of this sake [set] are inspired by the fleshy, juicy fruit of yellow water lilies. I have added my airy, three-dimensional lines. Each line relates to the next, like branches in a tree." She notes, "In my work I investigate the place of silver in everyday life. For me, the use of the objects is intimately associated with the artistic experience of them. My objects are an opportunity for presence, and for pleasure. They are adventures waiting to happen." The artist first "fell in love" with metal as a child when a copper cable blew into her parents' garden. Eriksson muses, "I really can't say why, but it keeps me interested. The plasticity and the precision. Its soft hardness. It is my best friend."

The boundary-pushing artists featured in the diverse, cross-generational spectrum of NMWA's exhibition also include the jewelers Lola Brooks, Susie Ganch, and Kerianne Quick; the Bangladeshi-born sculptor Rana Begum; and South American makers Alejandra Prieto (Chile) and Carolina Rieckhof Brommer (Peru). Like the alchemists of centuries ago, the female artists in *Heavy Metal: Women to Watch 2018* have conducted significant explorations across their chosen medium. They embrace a spirit of experimentation and possibility, reveling in the sheer variety of potential and interpretation associated with this material and its forms, regardless of an artist's gender.

Heavy Metal: Women to Watch 2018 is on view at NMWA in Washington, D.C. from June 28 to September 16.

Vanessa Mallory Kotz is a writer whose work has appeared in American Photo, AmericanStyle, *and* Popular Photography. *She has also edited catalogues for The Phillips Collection, The Galleries at Moore College of Art & Design, and Phoenix Art Museum.*

Petronella Eriksson
Sake jug with cups, 2017
silver
6 x 6 1/4 x 11 3/8"
Photo: Petronella Eriksson



Susie Ganch
Untitled (detail), 2010
steel, enameled copper, and panel
36 × 24 × 12"
Photo: Taylor Dabney
Courtesy of the artist and Sienna Patti Contemporary

Rana Begum
No.546 Chevrons (detail), 2014
paint on powder coated aluminum
77 1/2 × 208 1/4 × 2" overall
Photo: Philip White
Courtesy of the artist and Kate MacGarry, London

Composition I (necklace), 2014
canvas, Asian ink, linen, plastic beads, resin, thread
5 × 21 × 3/4"
Photo: Myung Urso

DUAL HARMONY: MYUNG URSO

The artist's holistic voice comes from exploring points of connection between opposing worlds.

by Katja Toporski

Native Language II
(neckpiece), 2013
wood, cotton, plastic beads, thread, gesso, sterling silver, lacquer
4 × 20 × 1.5"
Photo: Matt Wittmeyer

Solstice (brooch), 2012
cotton, Asian ink, silk, thread, sterling silver, lacquer
5 x 3 × 1 1/2"
Photo: Tim Fuss

The Korean artist Myung Urso's thesis for her fiber arts degree, titled "The Harmony between Metal and Fiber Materials," could be seen as a premonition of her future career. She wrote it in 1986, twenty years before she moved to the United States to join her husband, Leonard Urso, head of the metal department at the School for American Crafts at the Rochester Institute of Technology. By 2007, just a year after her arrival, she had taken the U.S. art jewelry world by storm. Her "instant" success was based on her blend of traditional Korean craft techniques with a contemporary jewelry aesthetic, which she applied with supreme compositional deftness. Urso's life and work straddles the opposing worlds of metal and fiber, as well as those of East Asia and upstate New York.

Urso creates adornment that employs elements of traditional East Asian culture in a reduced but very dimensional formal language. *Solstice,* from her 2012 "Signature" series, features several oval panels of cotton fabric stretched over a silver armature. While their shape reflects the brushstrokes used in Korean calligraphy, the cotton panels are treated as canvas for these marks, displaying segments of a larger image within layered ovals. In combination with blackened silver Urso creates an austere setting for another oval element, colored blood red like a setting summer sun.

Urso's love for jewelry is the result of an unusual path. After graduating with her MFA in fiber arts from Hongik University in Seoul, then working as a senior reporter for a Korean magazine titled *Monthly Crafts,* she went to London in 1993 to study museum and gallery management at the business school of City University. This credential opened numerous doors upon her return to Korea, where she became curator for a jewelry gallery. In 1998, she then opened her own craft gallery in Seoul called Hand & Mind. It was here that she was exposed to contemporary jewelry design and met people in the field. She learned to gauge her customers' responses to a variety of types of jewelry, forming the basis of a deep understanding that helped when she started to develop her own jewelry years later in the U.S.

As Urso began to explore the idea of making her own jewelry, she identified the use of textile materials as essential to her interests. Her definition of what constitutes fiber is wide-ranging, and she has used materials such as loofah, wood, and a variety of types of Korean paper in her work. She views fiber arts as an artistic expression that can take many forms, from wall decoration and wearables to small objects and sculpture. She cites in particular the works of recently deceased Polish sculptor Magdalena Abakanowicz, who created an intense presence through humble materials, as an inspiration. Sewing, a skill every woman in Korea is introduced to, is also referenced in much of Urso's work.

Calligraphy as inspiration and the calligraphic line are at times visible in Urso's work; in others less so. One of her earliest pieces, a brooch titled *Winter* (2007), features both textile and calligraphic elements. A strip of cotton canvas, almost saturated with black ink, is folded to form a simple basket, loosely

Winter (brooch), 2007
sterling silver, cotton, Asian ink, lacquer
3 1/3 × 3 × 1 1/2"
Photo: Dan Neuburger

Arpeggio (neckpiece), 2014
Jangpanji, gesso, steel wire
10 1/2 × 11 × 2 3/4"
Photo: Myung Urso

THERE IS RAWNESS TO URSO'S ROUGH EDGES AND UNEVEN SURFACES, YET AN IMMEDIACY AND BEAUTY RESULT FROM THESE IMPERFECTIONS.

held by a piece of silver wire. Both the markings on the canvas and the fold are very gestural, imbued with a directed spontaneity that reflects the hand of a skilled calligrapher. As with her expansive approach to fibers, Urso's interpretation of calligraphy is broad: she sees it as a philosophy rather than just black ink marks on paper and may use twigs or wood blocks for a brush. The gestural nature of the brushstroke, its spontaneity, and what it expresses about the nature of its creator is the underlying principle behind her process and has deep roots in her native culture.[1]

While the format of jewelry comes naturally to her, Urso has only received basic metalsmithing training. This independence from technical expectations is essential to her process. She does not plan or sketch; instead, she lets the material dictate the direction a work takes, with a focus on composition uninhibited by technical challenges. This practice requires an intense engagement with the material, balancing form, color, texture, and proportions, and at times the strength to resist the urge to add more than is needed. Urso follows simplicity as a principle, relying on her strong compositional intuition as a guide.

The necklace *Arpeggio* (2014) combines looped and coiled steel wire with elements made of Jangpanji, a sturdy paper used in flooring in Korea. The paper is ripped and folded, and the individual elements are stacked somewhat haphazardly. From this form, wire coils emanate organically into a neck cable. The entire arrangement is covered with gesso, which has a pure-white color that emphasizes the piece's sculptural nature. There is rawness to its rough edges and uneven surfaces, yet an immediacy and beauty result from these imperfections.

Urso insists that she would not be making jewelry had she not moved to the U.S. It was only from a distance that she could start to reevaluate her own Korean roots. The importance of place in her work also manifests through the lens of the natural world, which is illustrated through her materials choices and the mode of manipulation she chooses. The natural surroundings of upstate New York provided the setting for her first forays into jewelry-making, and they continue to offer inspiration. However, learning this new landscape also triggered memories of her upbringing in Okcheon, a town in rural central Korea, especially its mountains and rice fields.

As the middle child in a large family, Urso developed a strong work ethic

Voiceless Sound (brooch), 2013
hand-dyed ramie, wood, thread, gesso, sterling silver
4 × 3 1/2 × 1/4"
Photo: Myung Urso

NONE OF URSO'S SERIES APPEAR TO HAVE REACHED CLOSURE. THEY INSTEAD REPRESENT A DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDING OF TIME.

and a dexterity with materials. Helping her mother with housekeeping tasks such as sorting grains, knotting strings of arrowroot, and stacking vegetables provided her with a foundation in handiwork. Similarly, Korean cultural and spiritual practices that marked daily life also made an impression on her. Bowls of rice representing daily bread, as well as the practice of mothers praying for the well-being of their children in front of a bowl of water, later manifested themselves in her jewelry work. Containers like baskets, bowls, and hollowware of varying kinds feature in many pieces, such as in *Dwelling 1* and *Dwelling 2*, two brooches from 2009.

While many personal experiences figure in Urso's work, it is also helpful to examine them in a wider cultural context. Korean scholars Yoo Jin Kwon and Yhe-Young Lee, in their 2015 article titled "Traditional Aesthetic Characteristics Traced in South Korean Contemporary Fashion Practice," identified four categories in which traditional cultural practices are referenced in Korean fashion today. These categories prove compelling lenses for considering Urso's work: Symbolic Decoration, Pure Formality, Playful Spontaneity, and Natural Simplicity.[2] While Symbolic Decoration, in which images from popular belief systems or religion appear as decorative elements, does not seem to feature in Urso's work, the other three can be traced throughout her designs.

Kwon and Lee base what they call Pure Formality in Neo-Confucianism, characterized by a philosophy of strict social norms and virtues aligned closely with people's fear of and respect for nature. This belief system leads to an association of beauty with inner character, and represents austerity and purity through the colors blue and white. Urso's 2013 brooch *Voiceless Sound* combines a rough piece of wood that has been covered in gesso with an oval ring made of blue ramie, a linen like fabric made from Chinese nettle. Both components have been left untreated and show their natural imperfections, including unevenly handstitched seams on the ramie. The unbleached white used in traditional Korean ceramics and dress shows imperfections, and these impurities are associated with a naturally attained inner beauty. In Urso's brooch, the balance of white wood and blue ramie functions similarly.

Kwon and Lee cite a number of examples from Korean shamanistic practices underlying the principle of Playful Spontaneity, including the use of strips of colorful drapes and flags in

Dwelling I, II (brooches), 2009
silk, thread, sterling silver, lacquer
3 3/4 x 3 1/2 x 1" and
3 3/4 x 4 x 1 1/2"
Photo: Tim Fuss

Story (necklace), 2014
linen, wood, silk thread, beads, sterling silver
7 1/4 × 9 × 3"
Photo: Myung Urso

Chamber (brooch), 2017
recycled paper pulp, mixed media, sterling silver
3 × 3 1/2 × 1/2"
Photo: Myung Urso

both dress and the decoration of ceremonial areas. The villagers' practice of piling up stones at the village entrance and placing vibrant swaths of fabric in the trees above as a shrine to the village deity results in free and improvisational groupings of color. Urso's 2014 necklace *Composition* shows a similar openness in its arrangement: rounded strips of canvas and linen are layered in a seemingly spontaneous fashion and held together by a single seam across the top. The fabric pendant divides a strand of yellow beads into two parts, balancing positive and negative spaces in a playful arrangement reminiscent of the collection of colorful drapes in the trees at a Korean village entry.

Native Language 2 (2013) consists of a pendant suspended from a long strand of thin black beads. The main element is a rough piece of wood that is unevenly covered in Asian black ink, its fibrous tip appearing like a brush ready to be used on canvas. This element is balanced by a small oval piece of cotton that connects to one end of the beaded chain. Urso's restrained use of visual elements appears minimalist in nature and could be viewed in relation to the principle of Natural Simplicity. Kwon and Lee's article describes the Buddhist idea of monism, in which dual opposites are regarded as equally valid parts of the whole, and the notion of gong, which relates material existence to the idea of emptiness. The

Lotus (necklace), 2008
silk, thread,
sterling silver
9 × 7 1/4 × 1 1/5"
Photo: Tim Fuss

visual contrast of black wood against white cotton in Urso's pendant is unified by the raw state of both materials, which points to the earth as a shared generative source. The charred appearance of the wood also speaks to the fleetingness of existence.

Much the same way, rather than exploring one idea for a finite series of works and then moving on to the next, Urso puts all of her energy into the single piece she is creating at that moment. Each work is allowed its own theme, which is reflected in evocative titles like *Conversation, Chamber,* or *September.* However, there are thematic connections between the works within series that stretch across time in a nonlinear fashion. One of the earliest pieces in Urso's "Meditation" series, titled *Lotus* (2008), features a basketlike wire construction, with silk stretched over the sides and a void filled with a multitude of threads. This form reappears in a number of early pieces, while later pieces from the same series, such as *Story* (2014) and *Meditation* (2016), employ an entirely different formal language. None of Urso's series appear to have reached closure. They instead represent a different understanding of time, one that respects the "now," the present moment, and the material at hand.

Urso marked the ten-year anniversary of her entrance into the American jewelry world with a solo exhibition at Velvet da Vinci in San Francisco—the gallery's last show before it closed its doors to the public in 2017. The pieces were from her series "Trans-Form," which condenses the various strands that have run through her work to date. The brooch *Chamber* (2017) is made from recycled paper pulp like that found in egg cartons or fruit containers from the supermarket. While Urso created the containers in her early works by folding Hanji paper, for these newer pieces she found materials that provide the substance for creating an architectural form. None of the pieces in this series feature ink on canvas directly, but brush strokes of calligraphy run through the work invisibly and as an underlying principle. Whether it is the tearing and folding of paper pulp, or the forming and bending of the wire armatures, the gestural energy applied in each piece contains the same aesthetic force as that of calligraphic brush strokes on paper.

The remarkable success Myung Urso has enjoyed over the past ten years, coupled with the artist's intense focus on the development and evolution of her practice, leads one to consider where she will go next. The cultural amalgamation evident in earlier works seems to have moved under the surface, making way for a more harmonic blend of the dualities that inspire her. Urso's recent concentration on paring down to the essential points to future jewelry that is increasingly refined, but that remains rife with philosophical mysteries and inner beauty.

Katja Toporski is a jeweler, educator, and writer based in Washington, D.C.

1 Personal communication with the artist, August 2017. **2** Yoo Jin Kwon and Yhe-Young Lee, "Traditional Aesthetic Characteristics Traced in South Korean Contemporary Fashion Practice," *Fashion Practice: The Journal of Design, Creative Process & the Fashion Industry, 7,* no. 2 2015: 153-174 (https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/17569370.2015.1045348).

Meditation (brooch), 2016
hanji, wood, sand,
sterling silver, lacquer
3 × 3 1/2 × 2"
Photo: Myung Urso

Scene (brooch), 2017
recycled paper pulp, mixed media,
sterling silver
3 3/4 × 4 × 1/2"
Photo: Myung Urso

Garden (brooch), 2017
recycled paper pulp, mixed
media, sterling silver
3 3/4 × 3 × 1 1/5"
Photo: Myung Urso

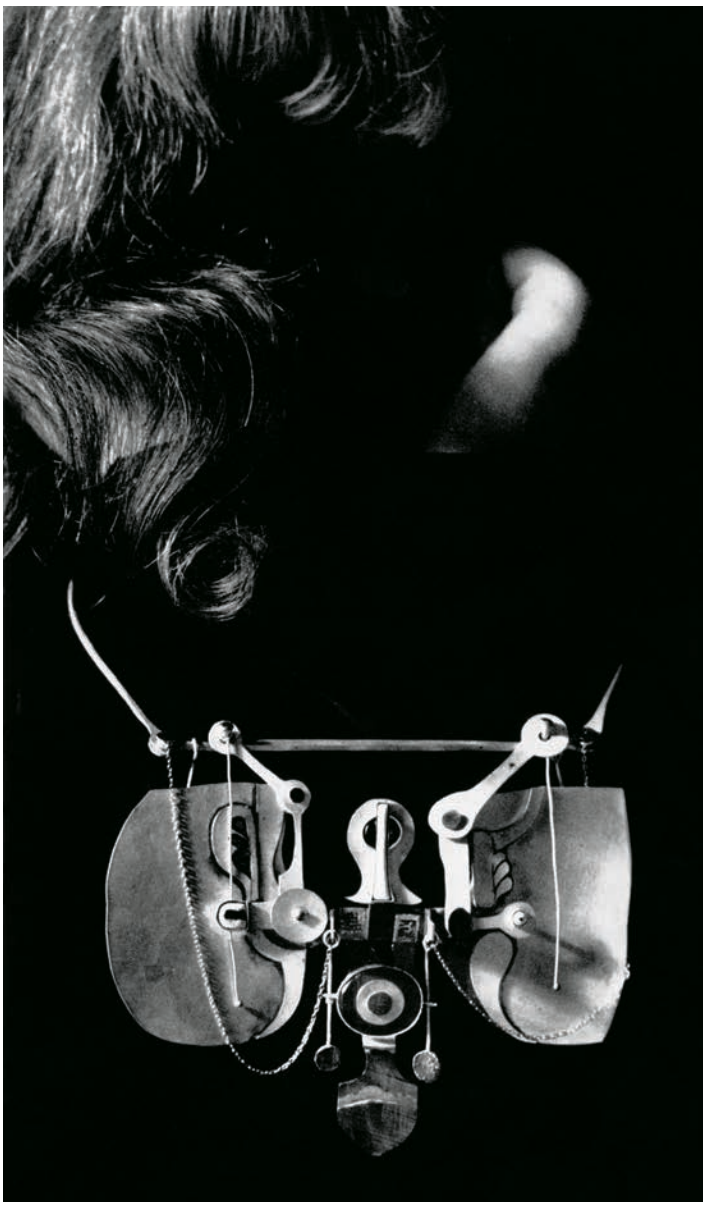
Aquarius I (brooch), 2017
recycled paper pulp, mixed
media, sterling silver
3 1/4 × 3 × 2"
Photo: Myung Urso

Jablonec '68: First International Silver Jewelry Symposium

Die Neue Sammlung: Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich
3.10.18 – 6.3.18

Catalogue: Angelika Nollert, Ed. *JABLONEC '68: The First Summit of Jewelry Artists from East and West.* Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2018.

By Ursula Ilse-Neuman



Hermann Jünger, Germany, *Necklace*, 1968. silver, gold, enamel, gemstones. Photo: Adolf Vrhel

1968 was a year of dramatic social and political turmoil across the globe. Early that year, Czechoslovakian democratic reforms had loosened the political and personal constraints imposed by the Soviet Union. For just a few brief months, in a period that became known as the Prague Spring, the arts were eager beneficiaries of this long-sought freedom. Studio jewelers seized the opportunity to express their individuality, liberated from state dictates favoring anonymous serial production. For a month that summer, the northern Bohemian city of Jablonec nad Nisou hosted the First International Silver Jewelry Symposium.[1] Known as Jablonec '68, this event offered the rare opportunity for nine young studio jewelers from Eastern Bloc states to work in creative harmony with eight prominent jewelers from Western Europe. Focusing on jewelry as artistic expression rather than mere body ornament, they created seventy objects as they inspired one another over four intensive weeks.[2]

To level the playing field, all participants worked with minimal means: silver sheet and wire, supplemented by glass, slate, and other local materials. This limited range of resources was liberating rather than constraining, as jewelers exchanged ideas and experimented with abstract concepts realized through highly inventive treatments of silver, gold's stepsister.

Viewing the reassembly of the works produced in Jablonec '68 fifty years later at the Neue Sammlung, in a show timed to open alongside the contemporary offerings of Munich Jewelry Week 2018, reveals this extraordinary meeting of creative hands and minds to be a milestone in the history of art jewelry. Thanks to curator Petra Hölscher's initiative and dedication, we gain insight into this relatively unknown gathering through an eye-opening exhibition that confirms renowned German goldsmith Hermann Jünger's insistence that the memory of this historic symposium should be kept alive.[3]

Retrieved from the archives of the Muzeum skla a bižuterie in Jablonec nad Nisou, and presented under glass on generously spaced

tables in the skylit museum gallery, the works that grew out of Jablonec '68 come to life as ingeniously realized compositions featuring intricate surface patterns and textures, as well as unusual kinetic elements, all drawn from the simplest of means. The excitement the jewelers themselves felt during this unique event is captured in both the exhibition and an accompanying spiral-bound publication, which includes a reprint of the 1968 catalogue.

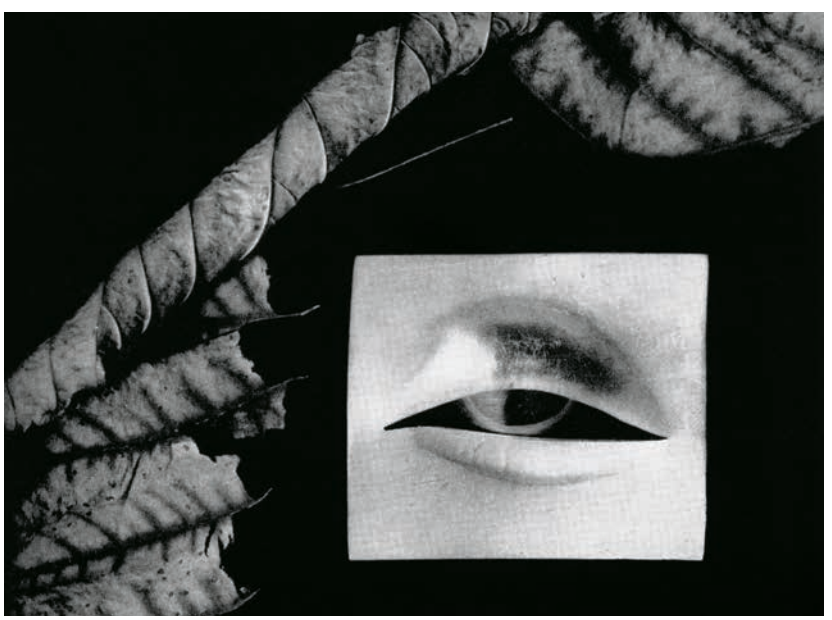
A number of the participating Western jewelers used the opportunity to find new forms of expression, including Hermann Jünger, who adopted some of the techniques of the young Slovak Anton Cepka. Jünger's pendant with kinetic and machine-like elements is reminiscent of Fernand Léger's "mechanical period" of the early decades of the twentieth century, and is quite uncharacteristic of Junger's generally less restrained compositions. Another future jewelry legend, the Italian artist Bruno Martinazzi, probably worked with silver for the first time at Jablonec '68. He produced five brooches featuring isolated parts of the human anatomy, from the eye to gently rounded buttocks, presaging his mature signature works.

The Viennese husband-and-wife team of Elizabeth Kodré-Defner and Helfried Kodré expanded their familiar jewelry forms with intricate surface textures in a brooch that incorporates locally found slate, semiprecious stones, and shells. Their extraordinary necklace, one of the more remarkable works in the exhibition, uses thin layers of silver sheet that appear to cascade and merge like flowing water. Another spectacular piece is the necklace of flattened silver wire that Romanian Florica Farcasu coerced into spirals and whorls, which are highlighted by two framed glass stones in a mobile-like composition worthy of comparisons to Calder. After Cepka, the most accomplished of the participating Czech jewelers was Jaroslav Kodejs, who was soon to become head of the art studio of the Museum of Glass and Jewelry in Jablonec. In the elegant collar on view, he contrasts the fluidity of his expertly flame-worked glass bubbles with the reflective silver band.

Elisabeth Defner-Kodré and Helfried Kodré, Austria, *Necklace*, 1968. silver. Photo: Adolf Vrhel

The spark lit that summer of 1968 was swiftly and brutally extinguished just one day after the symposium ended. On August 21, Soviet tanks rolled down the streets of Prague and the Iron Curtain fell again. Even so, the impact of Jablonec '68 symposium extended into 1969, when the works were shown in Prague, Pforzheim, Zurich, and Brno, and the revolutionary aspects of the jewelry had a significant impact on the development of many young jewelers. Swiss-born jeweler Therese Hilbert was studying in Zurich when Romanian Blanca Nepasická's brooches of thin, unpolished silver put her "in a state of inner turmoil" because they were "out of a world so different and free."[4] Indeed, the outstanding artistic quality and the joy of experimentation embodied in these rediscovered objects still stand today as testimony to the artists' creative spirit, which continued to endure long after the oppressors left the stage.

Ursula Ilse-Neuman is Curator Emerita at the Museum of Arts and Design, New York.



Bruno Martinazzi, Italy, *Brooch*, 1968. silver. Photo: Adolf Vrhel

1 Held during the annual international jewelry exhibition attended by 250,000, the Silver Symposium was organized by Vera Vokacova, the director of the Metal and Jewelry Department of the Prague Museum of Decorative Arts, which held the largest collection of Czech studio jewelry. / **2** Czechoslovak studio jewelry can be traced to the early 1960s and had made a significant impact at the 1967 Montreal World Expo. / **3** Petra Hölscher, personal communication, March 2018. / **4** Petra Hölscher, "Jablonec '68—far more than a résumé," in *Jablonec 68: The First Summit of Jewelry Artists from East and West, May, 2018*, edited by Angelika Nollert, Die Neue Sammlung, p.135.

Robert Baines: Living Treasure and Fabulous Follies

Bakalar & Paine Galleries, Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Boston
1.17.18 – 3.3.18

Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock
7.20.18 – 10.7.18

Eskenazi Museum of Art at Indiana University, Bloomington
2019

By Joshua Fischer

Installation view of *Robert Baines: Living Treasure and Fabulous Follies*. Photo: Eduardo Rivera

We have all felt museum fatigue, especially in the encyclopedic museum. Precious artifacts have stood the test of time and traveled great distances to be available to us, yet they may feel distant, especially when entombed in vitrines. Robert Baines's exhibition fights such fatigue, injecting new life and humor into these antiquities. Baines has studied Bronze Age goldsmithing for more than forty years to become Australia's leading archaeometallurgist. A master of granulation, he manipulates impossibly minute balls of precious metal. Baines connects this technique, perfected long ago by the Etruscans, directly to our present moment in his aptly titled exhibition, *Living Treasure and Fabulous Follies*—with much emphasis on *living*.

Just as it is in Baines's practice, history is an animating force in the exhibition. Two rows of vitrines lay out fictitious genealogies of objects that whimsically change form over time. In one section called "Armbandits," a series begins with a postcard from the Metropolitan Museum of Art's gift shop that pictures an Iranian gold armlet from the eleventh century. Baines asks: What if this photograph generated a set of copies? He then answers his own question by creating these forgeries, each of which he identifies as from a specific time period and place. Like a game of telephone, the end product vaguely resembles its starting point. The armlet shifts scale from historic adornment to bracelet to finger-ring to brooch, then back to finger-ring and on to hair clasp and button. It somehow ends up as a classic Australian "Iced VoVo" cookie. Some of the mistranslations are playfully implausible, while others retain greater fidelity to their postcard source—already once removed from the original object itself—despite changes in size and material. Even with the unlikely progression from armlet to cookie, there is an underlying visual logic: the pink vertical stripes of the marshmallow and red jam center of the "Iced VoVo" echo the symmetrical composition of the armlet. Baines suggests that design DNA passes from handmade artisanal objects to the routinized product for mass consumption as a matter of natural progression.

In the morphological approach to interpretation featured in the exhibition, Baines starts with a contemporary object: the compact disc. The CD does not change as wildly across time and place—never shapeshifting into a hair clasp or cookie—but Baines still finds plenty of room to play within the basic circular shape. He claims its primary ancestor to be a seventh-century Etruscan rosette from which spawn golden, bejeweled ornaments and fanciful brooches. A small, granulated gold disc, purported as being a Grecian piece from Madytos

Robert Baines
Compact Disc circa 2000, 2010. silver, glass powder coat, electroplate, compact disc. Photo: courtesy of the artist

Robert Baines
Official History of the Compact Disc, Giraffe circa 1620, 2010. silver. Photo: courtesy of the artist

Robert Baines
Official History of the Compact Disc. Etruscan, circa 5th century BC, Greek, 2008. gold. Photo: courtesy of the artist

circa third century BCE (but made by Baines in 2003), uses part of a thinly flattened Coke can as its base. Despite its surprising mass-market material, it could pass as an artifact.

In works like *Brooch, Meaner than Yellow* (2008), and the series "Hey True Blue" (2010), Baines's ancient doppelgangers morph from small and flat to dazzlingly sculptural. These pieces incorporate raucous colors like red, teal, and yellow that we might associate with garish contemporary plastics and children's toys. Baines coils, braids, twists, and loops metal to create intricate geometric forms that pile on top of one another, colliding and intertwining. These energetic wireframe abstractions read like architectural maquettes, reminiscent of Frank Gehry's precarious, undulating structures. In a final iteration, Baines uses the rainbow-metallic underside of CDs as reflective bases, transforming these soon-to-be obsolescent technological relics into gleaming pieces of jewelry that simultaneously take us back to antiquity and into the future.

The exhibition concludes under the theme "Collecting: An archaeology of the smallest collection of large jewelry in the world." Baines offers his own inflated luxury goods, citing Etruscan tombs as his inspiration, and in particular the discovery of a gold Etruscan fibula as large as someone's torso. Using a white wireframe structure, one work enlarges an Etruscan baule type earring to the size of someone's head. In another, Baines adapts a beautifully delicate golden funerary wreath into finely coiled tangles of black powdercoated metal enmeshed with yellow, red, and black toy cars.

Baines's view of collecting is featured on the gallery walls: "Private collections tend to demonstrate idiosyncratic and sometimes quirky preferences, while public collections appear more considered and a result of scholarship." This feeling of dichotomy between public and private also explains the beauty and fun of Baines's artistic practice, which takes the public, authoritative presentations of historical jewels in museums personally. His own rigorous scholarship and mastery of granulation does not result in a desire to retell an official story. Instead, it provides Baines license to invent a free-spirited new history, steeped *just enough* in fact. Baines makes the past more meaningful not by encasing it and setting it aside, but through its remaking, and creative leaps that connect to our contemporary moment.

Joshua Fischer is an independent curator and a masthead editor at Big, Red and Shiny, an online publication covering visual art in New England.

Robert Baines, *Ambandits Copy Iran (Gurgan), circa 11th century*, 2009-2010. silver gilt. Photo: courtesy of the artist & Gallery Loupe

JEWELRY OF IDEAS: GIFTS FROM THE SUSAN GRANT LEWIN COLLECTION

Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, New York
11.17.17 – 5.28.18

CATALOGUE:
The Jewelry of Ideas: The Susan Grant Lewin Collection.
Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum, New York, 2017

By Marjorie Simon

Susan Grant Lewin began collecting jewelry as a young journalist. She traveled frequently to Copenhagen, where she discovered the possibilities of modern jewelry in the sleek designs created for Georg Jensen by Vivianna Torun Bülow-Hube. In the 1980s, as global creative director of Formica Corporation, Grant Lewin helped promote their inventive new material ColorCore by creating a competition for designers, as well as an international exhibition, *Surface and Ornament,* which had its debut at the Art Institute of Chicago.[1] It didn't take long for ColorCore, with its solid color throughout, to attract jewelers such as Thomas Gentille, Bob Ebendorf,

Installation view of *Jewelry of Ideas: Gifts from the Susan Grant Lewin Collection*

and Ivy Ross to use it in their work.

Grant Lewin continued to educate herself on the potential of jewelry as art over succeeding decades by seeking out auteur jewelry at home and abroad. She eventually amassed a collection of more than 500 pieces, created by noted masters as well as up-and-coming jewelers. In 2017 she donated 150 of these treasures to the Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in New York, which were featured in a creatively mounted exhibition and catalogue.

The exhibition starts small in a dimly lighted entryway, with mid-century American artists that formed the backbone of Grant Lewin's early collecting, such as the innovative Art Smith. It gains momentum with as it immerses the visitor in the work as well as the spell of this majestic former home of Andrew Carnegie. Small rooms with short wall sections envelop the visitor in custom-made wallpaper featuring magnified, blurred, and abstracted details of exhibited work. One image illuminates the complex interlocking polycarbonate elements of the work of Svenja John; another, the feathery wing of Attai Chen's 2010 black paper necklace *Untitled (5)*. Reading the labels is a must. One wall appears to feature lacy sea foam at the ocean's edge, but it turns out to be the pattern of flattened gold granulation in *Sea Fan,* Harold O'Connor's modest silver brooch, residing in a nearby case.

The labels carefully identify the work and materials used, but from a purely visual point of view, the installation is a mixed bag. The overhead lighting illuminates the labels better than the work, and the low height of the display cases puts the average viewer some distance away from the pieces. Nonetheless, museumgoers might engage with a kind of art they may never have seen before, ranging from the raw and elemental (Dorothea Pruhl) to the painterly and decorative (Jamie Bennett); from the geometric (Giampaolo Babetto) to the narrative (Esther Knobel); and from the eternal (Eleanor Moty) to the ephemeral (John Iversen).

The installation is divided into categories such as "Nature," "Symbol and Metaphor," and "Geometric Abstraction" which are, curiously, not the same as those employed in the catalogue. Daniel Kruger's 2015 necklace takes nature literally with a trio of classic oval portraits or cameos containing real pressed flowers, insects, and natural objects. From David Bielander, the reigning master of *trompe-l'oeil,* an enchanting "garlic" pendant made of folded sheet silver would be likely to amuse rather than repel any unsuspecting vampire.

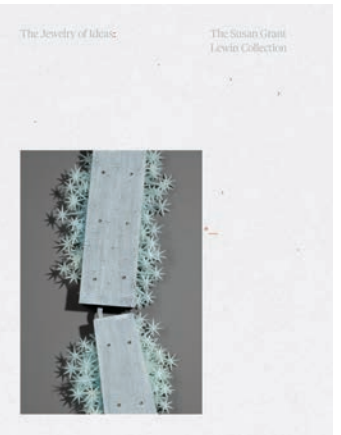
"Symbol and Metaphor" aptly represents Iris Eichenberg's diverse material sensibilities. Welcome examples by other contemporary artists include the optimistic constructions of Helen Britton (featured on the catalogue cover); a pyrite and glass necklace by Iris Bodemer, an unusually sly and sexy brooch by Don Friedlich; and a trio of brooches by Thomas Gentille. Arthur Hash and Doug Bucci are the only artists included that use 3D printing, though there are other twenty-first-century technologies in evidence, such as in Daniel Jocz's joyful, electrostatically flocked *Candy Wear.*

In a sense, the catalogue for *Jewelry of Ideas* picks up where *One of a Kind,* Grant Lewin's 1994 survey of American studio jewelry, left off. Illustrated by iconic pieces in the collection, an introduction by Ursula Ilse-Neuman (who curated the

Dorothea Pruhl, *Flyer Necklace*, 2010. cut and drilled elm wood, cord. 16 9/16 × 10 1/4 × 2 1/16". Photo: Courtesy of Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum

exhibition with Grant Lewin) condenses the story of the roots and branches of art jewelry in the twentieth century: "Some jewelers tell their stories and convey their thoughts explicitly through found objects, symbols and metaphors, while others prefer to use forms, materials, colors, and techniques to establish metaphoric relationships that leave interpretations open to each viewer," she writes. Viewers seeking to understand this array of objects—decorative, functional, public, and private—will find a path through unfamiliar territory. It should no longer come as a surprise that jewelry may now be made of anything.

As always with catalogues, there is the issue of scale. In life, colors and textures pop, and dimensionality lends solidity to a brooch, while sometimes works featured across one or even two pages of a book are revealed to fit in the palm of one's hand. The unlabeled thumbnail photographs are a little hard to see on the matte gray pages. And identifying information is contained in the text, not called in captions, which has the implicit effect of directing attention to the art first and the artist second. By no means a criticism, it emphasizes the evolutionary stream of ideas over individuals.



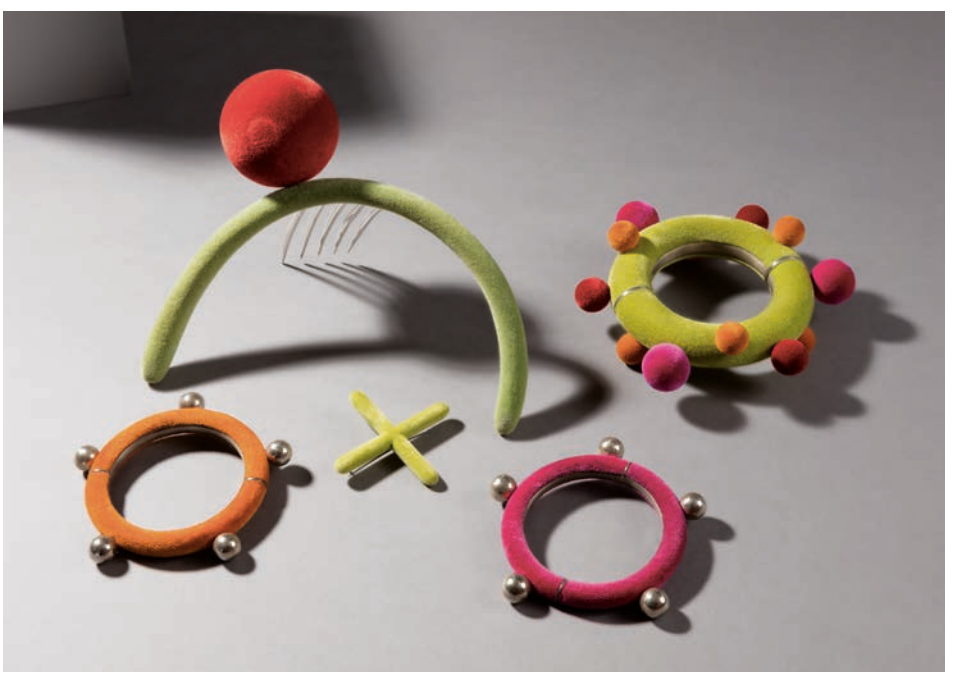
Catalogue cover, *The Jewelry of Ideas: The Susan Grant Lewin Collection*

Who are these artists in Grant Lewin's collection? Some surprise with their content, some in their material choices, and some by the simple audacity of their imagination. In the early days, Americans predominated. However, within the past fifteen years, the majority are from western Europe, Scandinavia and Great Britain; a few are from Asia and Israel. But even this distribution is misleading, as so many global artists have studied in Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK.

Collectors famously desire to possess something that no one else can or will have. But jewelry, as it is worn on the body, is singularly semiotic, a coded communication for the identity and memory of the owner. Collector and educator Helen Williams Drutt has said it is the collector's responsibility to place work in the public domain, where it may inform and delight others.[2] Susan Grant Lewin is to be commended for doing exactly that.

In the end, a collection is less a survey of the field than a snapshot of the desires of one person. How will viewers understand the most recent work, with its material and conceptual innovations? Will they find a way into work that is layered and subtle, and think about why artists choose jewelry, rather than, say, painting, ceramics, or collage to express themselves? We might ask that museumgoers to *Jewelry of Ideas* ask themselves these same questions.

1 Despite having been used for decades, in the postwar period Formica set a set a precedent for creativity by imagining non-industrial uses for its plastic laminate. But the "aggressive use of ColorCore by artists...stimulated a new perception of material value..." Sarah Bodine and Michael Dunas, *Formica & Design*, Edited by Susan Grant Lewin, Rizzoli, NY, 1991, p. 125. / 2 Museum acquisition and documentation of individual collections seem to be experiencing a bit of a moment. Beginning in 2006, Daphne Farago gave 650 pieces of jewelry and hundreds of craftworks to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Also in 2006 the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston acquired 600 pieces from Helen Williams Drutt and produced an encyclopedic catalogue. And in 2016, Lois Boardman gave 300 pieces to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), to name just a few.



Daniel Jocz
Candy Wear (clockwise from top left):
Tiara, 2000
copper, electroformed, assembled, and soldered silver covered in electrostatically-applied rayon flocking bonded with adhesive
4 13/16 × 7 9/16 × 4 3/4"

Bracelet, 1999
electroformed, assembled, and soldered silver covered in electrostatically-applied rayon flocking bonded with adhesive, magnets
1 11/16 × 5 5/16"

X Brooch and Two Bracelets, 2000-2001
2 9/16 × 3/8" and
7/16 × 3 15/16"
electroformed, assembled and soldered silver covered in electrostatically-applied rayon flocking
Photo: Courtesy of Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum

MARJORIE SCHICK: IN MEMORIAM (1941–2017)

BY GLEN R. BROWN

Marjorie Schick

Photo:
Amy Meyers

MARJORIE SCHICK NEVER cared for artistic convention. She thrived in lawless interstices and the fertile, uncharted voids of deposed tradition. From the avant-garde Op and Nouveau-Realist exuberance of her late-'60s papier-mâché bracelets, to the scintillating sprawl of her more recent circles of stitched and painted canvas, the inclination of her art was always to spurn moderation. Often exceeding the physical bounds of practicality, Schick's works habitually overran conceptual parameters as well, especially those encompassing traditional disciplines. In a personal variation on the late-twentieth-century integration of craft, design, and fine art, she pried open the walls between jewelry, sculpture, painting, performance, and fashion design, picking freely from each, and in the process making any insistence on their discreteness seem antiquated and doctrinaire.

Schick's touchstone amid the disintegration of disciplinary boundaries was always the body, sometimes as an anchor to the material composition and sometimes as a more evasive element. She developed jewelry capable of sustaining presence in the absence of the body, and sculpture that embraced the body physically while embodying a haunting contingency to it conceptually. To some degree there were early-twentieth-century precedents for her wearable art, in Dadaist ad hoc habiliments, Picasso's costume designs for *Parade,* and Oskar Schlemmer's *Triadic Ballet* creations—but such things were designed for the stage. Schick's works, in contrast, referenced the more complex role of the body in art in a lineage from Jackson Pollock's action paintings, through happenings, performance, and environments. Like these, her works situated the living, moving body at the center of art.

Shick acquired the general concept of "lived art," as she liked to call it, early on from the example set by Alma Eikerman, her mentor at Indiana University. For Schick, the consequences of a full integration of art and life extended well beyond Eikerman's advice to make all surfaces of jewelry count, even those not visible during wear. Initially Schick created objects equally at home around a wrist or on a tabletop, but by 1990 she had begun to explore the possibilities of symbiotic works, in which bracelets, rings, and brooches were both integral to and detachable from other elements in larger compositions. These took the form of wall-mounted painted reliefs, freestanding sculptures, and folding screens.

While Schick will undoubtedly be remembered best as an avid transgressor against the boundaries of art disciplines and an intrepid pioneer of expanded scale in jewelry, her aesthetic contributions to the field of wearable art as a stunning colorist, inventive manipulator of form, and master of tendentiously complex, Kandinsky-like composition were also significant. Perhaps she leaves her most consequential legacy as a champion of non-precious materials such as papier-mâché, wood, and plastic laminate, in jewelry that asserts its value in terms more conceptual than material. If genius consists not only of thinking the formerly unthinkable, but also of normalizing it for generations to come, then Schick will undoubtedly be remembered as one of the foremost figures in the development of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century wearable art.

Glen R. Brown is a Professor of Art History at Kansas State University. An interview that he conducted with Marjorie Schick in 1998 fundamentally shaped the perspective that he has held during twenty years of writing on contemporary jewelry and wearable art. He is a contributor to the book Sculpture to Wear. The Jewelry of Marjorie Schick *(Arnoldsche, 2007).*

Marjorie Schick
Amenhotep I, 2002
This is the first piece that the author and Schick worked on together.
Dowel collar: painted wood and cord, 64 × 64 × 2.5 cm
Feather collar: painted papier-mâché, wood, thread, 69 × 16 × 1.5 cm
Photo: Gary Pollmiller

NO RESTRICTIONS BUT EXCELLENCE: REMEMBERING MARJORIE SCHICK

BY ANNIE PENNINGTON

I DIDN'T KNOW that Marjorie Schick would change the trajectory of my life when we first met. I walked into my first class at Pittsburg State University in 2002, and caught a glimpse of the instructor wearing the biggest necklace I had ever seen. Her hair was short and bright orange, and her lips were a vibrant pink-tinged orange to match. As she was bedecked with rings and bangles, probably earrings too, I immediately thought, "I like her!"

The two equally important halves of Marjorie's professional life—as a dedicated teacher and a world-renowned professional artist—coexisted intimately in that classroom, which also doubled as her studio. Her personal work was scattered about the room in various stages of completion, and custom-made shipping boxes piled up in unused corners. One could always find her working late into the night, painting stitched canvas or a wooden component, recording the provenance of her most recent piece on a notecard, or working alongside her assistants. As students, we learned what it was to be not only a maker but a professional artist through her generous ability to immerse us in all aspects of her practice.

Marjorie was soft-spoken and gentle. She was also tireless, tenacious, and a never-ending source of inspiration and encouragement. In whatever she did, she was always fully invested, whether she was teaching, working on a new piece for an upcoming exhibition, having lunch every single day with her husband, Jim, or mentoring a student. Trained under the influential artist and teacher Alma Eikerman, Marjorie passed on Alma's strict work ethic and demand for technical achievement to her students, while also insisting that they fully explore their chosen materials and develop individualized working processes. She also taught her students how to apply to exhibitions, accept rejection, and trust their instincts. At the first session of each class she would assign a one-day project based on a theme; no material was off-limits, and this encouraged students to work quickly without the inevitable self-doubt that takes hold without deadlines. She held her students to a high standard, but did so in a way that encouraged their vision and abilities. This intent had to be accompanied by impeccable craftsmanship and attention to detail, especially to the back of a piece.

I worked for Marjorie between 2002 and 2006, assisting her with everything from painting to sanding to sewing to box-making. We spent months preparing for her book, *Sculpture Transformed: The Work of Marjorie Schick* (2006), repairing decades' worth of work and taking day-long trips to have her work rephotographed. Hearing her describe each piece, its struggles or successes, allowed me to see the whole of Marjorie. Whenever I struggled with creating a cohesive body of work, I looked to the moment that I held her some of her early metalwork for the first time. I saw elements of those initial years reflected in later pieces I had repaired, a reminder that everything is connected in one way or another.

Second only to my own mother, Marjorie Schick has been the most influential person in my life. She was my professor and my role model, and we remained close until her death. The world is a little darker without her in it, and I—along with hundreds of her past students and colleagues—will always miss her light.

Marjorie Schick
One of the First Six, Bracelet, 1967
painted papier-mâché, formed and painted
3 × 7 1/2 × 6 1/2"
Photo: Gary Pollmiller

Annie Pennington is a jewelry designer and maker, former Associate Editor of Art Jewelry *magazine, a freelance writer and videographer, and Marketing/Sales Manager at Potter USA.*

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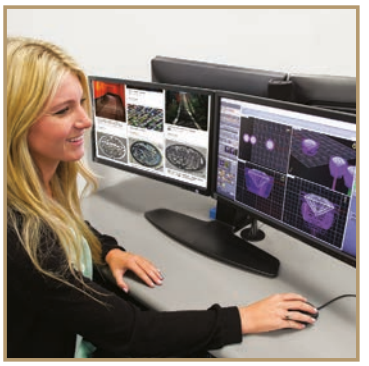

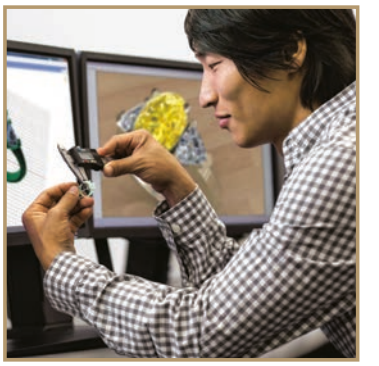

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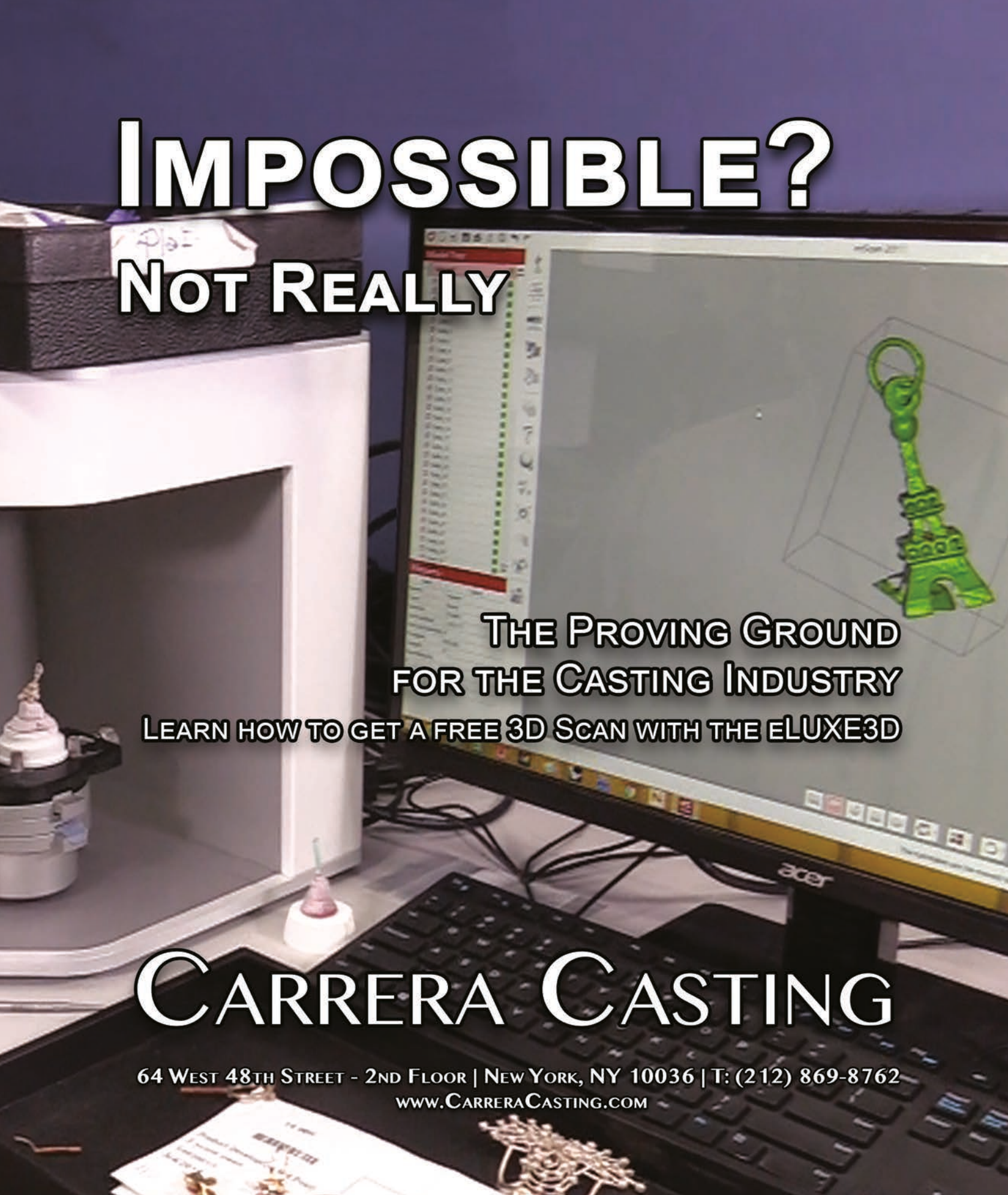
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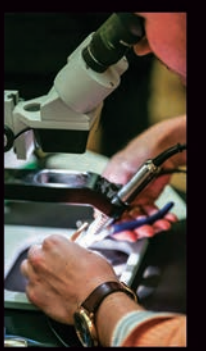

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Announcing the 2018 Winners of the

MJSA VISION AWARDS

DESIGN COMPETITION

Every year, the MJSA Vision Awards celebrate outstanding achievements in jewelry making and design. The winning entries are profiled in the August issue of *MJSA Journal,* and will be displayed during the 2019 MJSA Expo at the Javits Center in New York City. Entries for the 2019 competition will be accepted starting in January. For more information, go to *MJSA.org*.

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2

1) First Place, Professional Excellence, 4+ Years in Business and First Place, Laser Distinction (sponsored by LaserStar Technologies)
Ombré Pendant by **Adam Neeley** of Adam Neeley Fine Art Jewelry, Laguna Beach, California

2) Second Place, Professional Excellence, 4+ Years in Business
Fire Teardrop Pendant Necklace by **Rachael Mitchell** of Stuller Inc., Lafayette, Louisiana

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3) First Place, Professional Excellence, 1-3 Years in Business
Eternity of the Plant Kingdom Set (earrings and brooch) by **Xuehui Liu** of Grace•Hui Jewelry Studios, San Jose, California

4) Second Place, Professional Excellence, 1-3 Years in Business
The Entrepreneur Ring by **Julie Lamb** of Julie Lamb New York, Hastings on Hudson, New York

5) First Place, CAD/CAM Distinction (sponsored by EnvisionTEC)
Peridot Scroll Ring by **Andrew Bugher** of Andrew Bugher Design, St. Paul, Minnesota

6) First Place, Custom Design Distinction (sponsored by Century Casting)
Atmosphere Cocktail Ring by **Victor Hararuk** of V. Hararuk JDS, Kiev, Ukraine

7) First Place, Responsible Practices Distinction (sponsored by Richline Group)
At the Creek Pendant by **Wolfgang Vaatz** of Earth Terra Erde Inc., Rio Rico, Arizona

8) First Place, Future of the Industry Award (sponsored by the MJSA Education Foundation)
La Inspiración de una Mariposa Necklace by **Angely Martinez**, Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), New York City

9) Second Place, Future of the Industry Award
CAD-rendered Interlock Ring by **Hsinyu Chu**, Gemological Institute of America (GIA), Carlsbad, California

MJSA Would Like to Thank This Year's Vision Award Sponsors:

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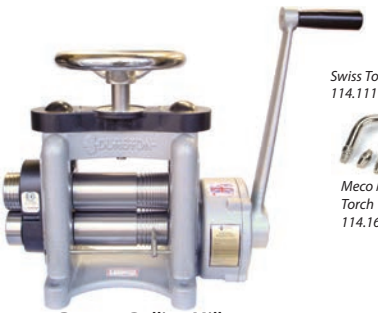

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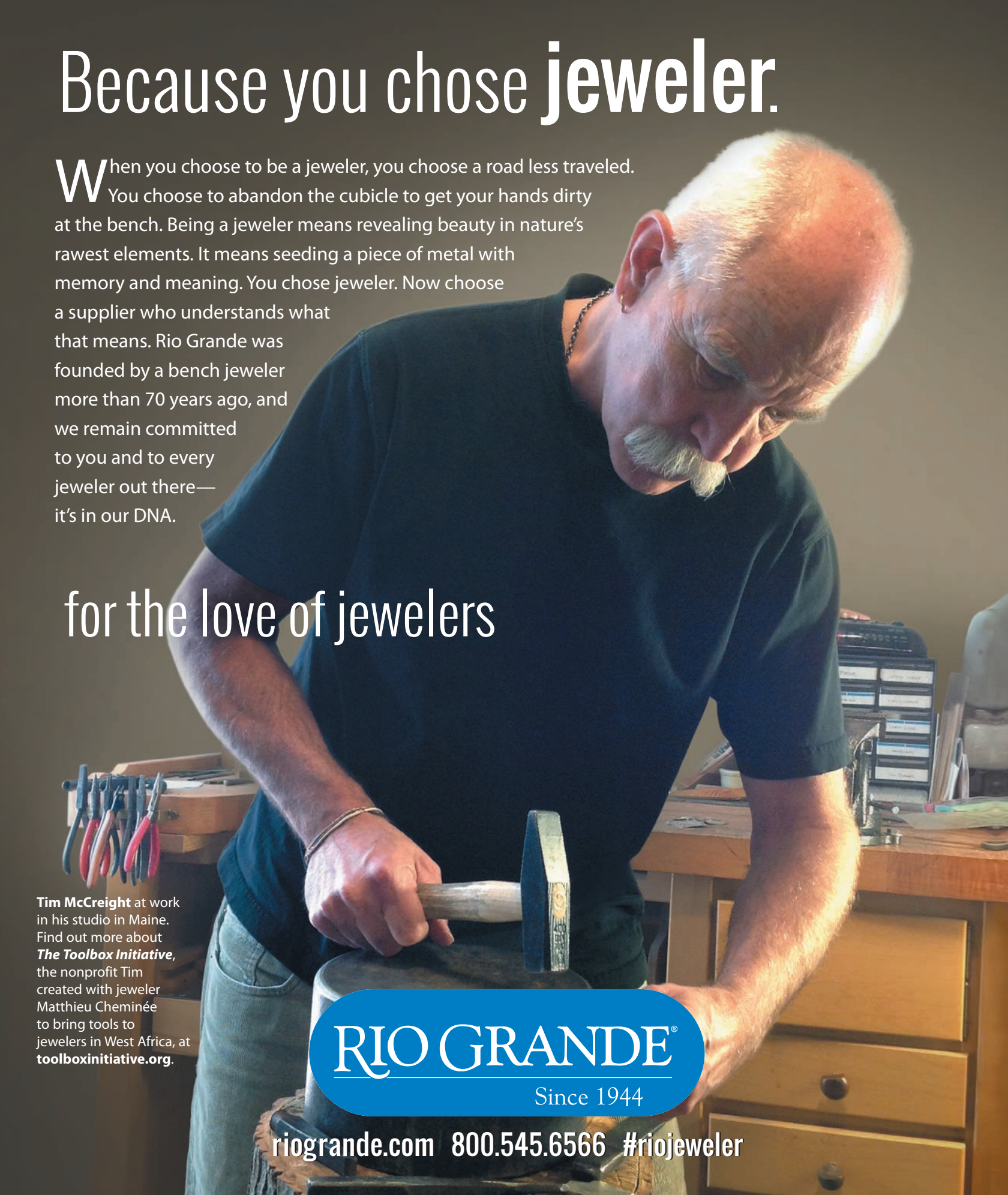

Tim McCreight at work in his studio in Maine. Find out more about ***The Toolbox Initiative***, the nonprofit Tim created with jeweler Matthieu Cheminée to bring tools to jewelers in West Africa, at **toolboxinitiative.org**.

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